

**GOOD AND BAD
ENGLISH**

GOOD AND BAD ENGLISH

*A Guide to
Speaking and Writing*

By
WILFRED WHITTEN
and
FRANK WHITAKER

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PART I

WHAT IS GOOD ENGLISH?

by

WILFRED WHITTEN

THE TRUTH ABOUT GRAMMAR

The Policeman and the Law—What is a Grammar School?—Grammar and Clear Thinking—Dr Jespersen on “human” Grammar—Can authors parse?—A purist’s creed—“Go slow”—“It is me”—The mistake of Darius

GRAMMAR was made for language, not language for grammar. Many people seem to think that the truth is the other way. Their one idea of good English is that it obeys the rules found in school grammar books, and of bad English that it disobeys these rules. This is far from the whole truth. Language came before grammar as the hen comes before your breakfast egg.

The word itself shows this, for it is but the Greek word *gramma*, meaning a letter, in origin; therefore it was written language itself, not a set of rules for writing it well. But it came to have this second meaning and has it to-day, with the result that correct grammar is thought to be synonymous with good writing. Yet it is no more language than a map of London is London. To put it in another way, grammar is to language what the policeman is to the Law—the servant of the law, not the law-maker. Language is a law unto itself and grammar does but register its

changes, and then only when those changes have been accepted by good custom. This principle—that Grammar is the servant of Language, not its dictator—governs many of my notes on good and bad English in this volume.

Good writing never did follow a knowledge of grammar. On the contrary—the rules of grammar were deduced from good writing, not imposed on it. Shakespeare never saw an English grammar book for the reason that none existed in his time. He knew as much Latin grammar as he had learned at the Stratford-on-Avon grammar school. The very term “grammar school” is a misnomer, for, as Dr. Hubert R. Hurter has pointed out, our first grammar schools were founded before English grammar was constructed. The first English grammar appeared seventeen years after Shakespeare’s death, and the study itself made such slow progress that more than a century and a half passed before Lindley Murray (1745–1826) composed his famous manual. It appeared eleven years after the death of Dr. Johnson, and earned for him both fame and fortune. Yet there is some pathos and much Quaker honesty in Lindley Murray’s confession (in his preface) that, when all is said, correct speech is less a matter of grammatical rule than of *clear thinking*.

Good writers, as a rule, know little grammar; what they learned of it at school they have mostly

forgotten If, say, Mr H G Wells and Mr Aldous Huxley can parse their own sentences they are exceptional among practised writers Confessing that he has forgotten nearly everything about syntax, Sir John Squire remarks (in *Flowers of Speech*) that even if grammar has been well learned it can safely be forgotten, "when a man's habit of logical expression has been formed, just as a scaffolding is forgotten when a building is complete or a mould broken when the casting has been made " It is with only mock regret that he breaks into these lines

*I remember, I remember
Those first aspiring years,
The mastery of analysis
I won with blood and tears,
I could not parse a sentence now,
Alas! 'tis little joy
To know I'm further off from syntax
Than when I was a boy*

Lest it be said that the Quaker Lindley Murray is out of date, and Squire only playful, I ask you to read this short statement of his aims made by that most distinguished living grammarian, Dr Otto Jespersen in his *Modern English Grammar* and again in his *Essentials of English Grammar*

"It has been my endeavour to represent English Grammar not as a set of stiff dogmatic precepts,

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according to which some things are correct and others absolutely wrong, but as something living and developing under continual fluctuations and undulations, something that is founded on the past and prepares the way for the future, something that is not always consistent or perfect, but progressive and perfectible—in one word, human ”

Since language is not based on law but—to quote Dr Jespersen again—is “nothing but a set of human habits,” its policeman needs to be tactful and discreet

In *Words and Idioms* Mr Logan Pearsall Smith quotes from the French purist, Claude de Vaugelas, this dictum “It is noteworthy that all the ways of speaking which custom has established in contravention of the rules of grammar, should, far from being regarded as vicious, and as errors to be avoided, be on the contrary cherished as an adornment of language, which exists in all beautiful languages whether living or dead.”

An accepted idiom owes no allegiance to grammar, it is free-born. It may happen to be grammatical, but if it is not, it is immune from criticism on that account. It can bend grammar to its own use. In “The Highway Code” these sentences occur. “Go slow in narrow roads,” “Go slow when passing animals,” “When turning, go slow and give way.” The stickler for grammar, or what he takes to be grammar, contends that

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"slow" should be "slowly" Not at all!—"go slow," "hard hit," "froze hard," "loom large," "work hard," "walk fast," "burn bright," etc., are idiomatically, therefore grammatically, correct. Yet the freedom of an idiom cannot be transferred to a similar phrase that is not an idiom You may "go slow" but not "walk slow," though you may walk as "fast" as you please. "Hardly" can be used in such a way (Fowler points out) as to reverse the sense Thus "For attendance on the workhouse he receives £105 a year, which, under the circumstances, is hardly earned" Again "It must be remembered that Switzerland is not a rich country, and that she is hardly hit by the war" By conforming to orthodox grammar these sentences convey the opposite of what is intended

It is me is bad grammar but yet is good English because it is the accepted idiom Technically, of course, *it is me*, *that's him*, are wrong, but they have passed much too far into colloquial usage for censure Dr Vizetelly illustrates this in the following dialogue "A grandson was standing before a mirror After reflection, he said, 'Yes, that's mel' His grandmother corrected. 'You should say, 'That is I'' Tommy reflected a moment and then replied, 'It may be I, but it certainly looks like Mel'" Mr. Roy Moulton throws up the sponge in the following lines —

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*"A thing that always puzzles me—it baffles
me the more I try—*

*Is to determine when I'm Me,
And when I'm strictly speaking 'I',
It seems as plain as plain can be,
But other times, oh, me, oh, my!
I'm positively sure I'm Me
But one solution I now know,
It seems quite simple, you'll agree;
I'm 'I' to those who want me so,
To those that don't—well, I'm just 'ME'"*

Accept the idiom and spare yourself these teasings of doubt, rules are made for the benefit of the ruled, not of the ruler King Darius, when asked to make "a firm decree," signed the proposed statute "that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not" Such finality works badly in Law. It worked badly for Darius In Language it can work badly for everyone

CLEAR THINKING

EVERY writer knows what it is to be unable to set his brain to work Dr Johnson said that the thing to do is to put oneself to one's task *doggedly*. This is the method of dead-lift. But there is another way In his bright little book, *Memory Efficiency and How to Obtain It*, Mr. J. Louis

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Orton condemns the physical tension and brow-knitting which so many people bring to mental work. "The effectiveness of ease, as contrasted with the ineffectiveness of effort, is of supreme importance to memory-efficiency *Trying hard* distracts" Thought and memory cannot be coerced, and he illustrates this by a story of George Eliot and Herbert Spencer

"On one occasion, George Eliot, then Miss Evans, having remarked to him that considering how much thinking he had done, she was surprised to see his forehead so unlined, he replied 'I suppose it is because I am never puzzled' Upon this, Miss Evans retorted. 'Oh! that's the most arrogant thing I have ever heard uttered'

"Spencer denied the truth of her allegation, and proceeded to explain that the reason he was never puzzled was that he never 'put his mind at the mercy of the subject' Instead of sitting down to puzzle out the solution of a question, he was satisfied to return to it from time to time until, 'little by little, in unobtrusive ways, without conscious intention or appreciable effort, there would grow up a coherent and organized theory' "

There is much to be said for this unpuckered way of thinking When the brain seems to

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malingering, lie down if you can, dismiss everything but the wall-paper pattern, and practise some deep breathing for, say, five minutes Mr Orton adds, "The mental state to be kept in mind throughout is *I can*, it is the necessary accompaniment of *I will* in every achievement "

ARE 850 WORDS ENOUGH?

BERNARD SHAW IN BASIC ENGLISH

THE claim that most things—indeed everything that is not too technical or too mystical—can be expressed within a vocabulary of only 850 English words is startling and fascinating That is the claim of the promoters of Basic English We have heard a good deal about the system in recent years, and it is sponsored by the Orthological Institute

You can drop a post card to the Institute asking for a list of books in this pemmicanized English One of the latest is Mr. Bernard Shaw's burlesque of war, *Arms and the Man* Mr Shaw has allowed his play to be put into the 850 words which constitute Basic English and which are usefully printed at the end of the volume. The result is surprisingly good; the play remains not only readable but, in a way, ingratiating. One might liken it to shelled peas. who cares where

ARE 850 WORDS ENOUGH?

the pods have gone? Unfortunately, but also fortunately, that is not the whole of the matter.

Mr A. K. Ogden, who introduces the volume, is careful to warn readers not to think that the Basic play is put forward as any improvement on the play as first written. It is not, and cannot be. But an important book in Basic may be a great help to foreigners, and even to many English people who are not well up in English. Mr Ogden says "The fact that there may be some loss, in forcing great writing into 850 words, is not important if Basic is looked on not only as an international language but as a possible step to reading normal English with pleasure." Even so, Basic English, which manacles free English, is self-manacled. It cannot be applied to poetic prose, still less to poetry itself.

Let us see how it works in practice. Here is a passage from *Arms and the Man* as Mr Shaw wrote it in full and free English.

RAINA Ugh! But I don't believe the first man is a coward. I believe he is a hero!

MAN. That's what you'd have said if you'd seen the first man in the charge to-day.

RAINA Ah, I knew it! Tell me—tell me about him.

MAN He did it like an operatic tenor—a regular handsome fellow, with flashing eyes

and lovely moustache, shouting his war-cry and charging like Don Quixote at the wind-mills. We nearly burst with laughter at him, but when the sergeant ran up as white as a sheet, and told us they'd sent the wrong cartridges, and that we couldn't fire a shot for the next ten minutes, we laughed at the other side of our mouths. And hadn't even a revolver cartridge—nothing but chocolate. We'd no bayonets—nothing. Of course they just cut us to bits. And there was Don Quixote flourishing like a drum-major, thinking he'd done the cleverest thing ever known, whereas he ought to be court-martialled for it.

Now take the same passage as it appears in Basic English

RAINA Ugh! But it doesn't seem to me that the first man has any fear. He is a great man!

MAN That's what you would have said if you had seen the first man in the attack to-day.

RAINA Ah, I was certain of it. Give me an account of him.

MAN He did it like an opera-actor—a very good-looking young man, with bright eyes and beautiful black hair on his lip, giving his war-cry and coming down on us like a Don Quixote. How we were laughing! But when the sergeant came running up as white as death, and said,

we had been sent the wrong things, and that we would be unable to let off a machine-gun for ten minutes, we were laughing at the other side of our mouths. And I hadn't even lead for my gun, only chocolate. We'd no other arms at all, nothing. Naturally, we were simply cut to bits. And there was Don Quixote waving his blade like a chief bandsman, quite certain that it was all his own doing, though he might well have been turned out of the army for his behaviour.

Compare these two versions of the same passage, and you will understand what Basic English can do and what it cannot do.

Many concrete terms have had to go by the board, in every instance with more or less loss. Thus the 850 words of Basic do not include "windmill"—it was unlikely that they would. All the suggestion in Don Quixote's immortal tilting at the windmills is lost. As Mr Ogden says, Basic English "gets the complex structure of thought and language broken down, but the process of building up is dependent on *words of power* which have no place in the 850." The italics are mine in this passage (as first written) "windmills" is a word of power. In Basic English you cannot get nearer than "wind-machines," and then you turn the mock-sublime into the

false-ridiculous Sometimes the necessary paraphrase is merely weak "A regular handsome fellow, with flashing eyes and lovely moustache" is diluted to "a very good-looking young man, with bright eyes and beautiful black hair on his lip" "A drum major" becomes "a chief bandman"

Basic English is for the basic purposes of life only.

BE-

A CORRESPONDENT asked whether there is any authority for the word "bestrangle" He wanted to write "our precedent-bestrangled officials" but could not find the word in any dictionary. It would be in the Oxford English Dictionary if one or two writers of distinction had used it, for any one is at liberty to prefix "be" to a verb who cares to take the risk of criticism It is used as an intensive, usually with the notion of repetition, as in "bespatter," or deliberateness as in "be-think," or embraciveness as in "begirt" I do not like "bestrangle" because the act or state of a strangle does not easily admit the notion of continuity or repetition which you get in words like "betrodden," "befog," "begrimed," "bedaub," "bepraise," "beset," or "bedizen." Moreover, "bestrangled" is unnecessarily violent. "Precedent-bound" or "precedent-clogged" would

do "Bestrangled" draws too much attention to itself

The strange words "bepuzzle," "bequarrel," and "bestare" have dictionary sanction Fielding, in *Tom Jones*, has "Mercy on him, poor heart! I bepitied him, so I did" Carlyle was addicted to such forms as "becrimsoned," "bepilgrimed," "bemuzzled" He even wrote "bedinnered," and in his *French Revolution* is the sentence "Open scoundrels rode triumphant, bediademed, becoronetted, bemitred" But then he was Carlyle

THE UNRULY HYPHEN

THE lady was resident at a West End hotel A dispute arose as to whether "West End" should be hyphenated

The right and wrong uses of the hyphen depend on the writer's precise meaning, and one would suppose that this would be a sufficient guide Yet the hyphen is a stumbling-block to many writers and printers The mischief is that a hyphen is often inserted where it is not wanted, and as often omitted where it is required by the sense In either of these ways the writer's meaning may be perverted Fowler neatly illustrates this by two phrases

An infallible wrinkle-remover.

A superfluous hair-remover.

The first phrase carries the intended meaning. But in the second, to make form and sense agree, you must shift the hyphen so that the designation becomes "superfluous-hair remover", as it is, the hair-remover itself is dubbed superfluous.

The hyphen should not be used unnecessarily, therefore not in "West End," which no more needs it than "North America "

GARDENERS' LATIN

GERTRUDE JEKYLL's beautiful posthumous book, *A Gardener's Testament*, consisting of notes and articles written in her last years and containing her ripest garden wisdom, has one painful feature. It reminds one of the suffocation of English tree, plant, and flower names by Latin nomenclature. And such Latin!

It is to Carl von Linné, whose own name, oddly enough, was Latinized either by himself or his disciples into Linnæus, that we owe the pseudo-classical names that trouble the eye in nurserymen's catalogues and, of necessity, in such gracious books as Miss Jekyll's Linnæus, who was born in Sweden in the reign of our Queen Anne, and spent some time in England in the early Johnsonian period, devised a new and scientifically sound classification of plants.

based on stamens and pistils. The homely English plant names could be of no use to him. A rigid yet expressive nomenclature was needed, and Linnæus resorted to Latin and Greek. Even so, classical Latin and classical Greek would not always serve; they had to be adapted to botanical truth and contorted in various ways to meet the ever-growing discoveries of new wild plants and new garden varieties. Nor is this all. To the desire of gardeners to immortalize themselves in the names of their creations we owe such christenings as *Lilium Harisu*, *Iris Bakeriana*, *Narcissu*, *Horsfieldu*, *Rosa Watsoni*, *Clematis Jackmanis*, *Crocus Tommasianus*, and *Alonsoa Warsceviczu*. Who was Jackman, who was Baker, who was Tommas?



This watering-pot Latin is like the old "dog-Latin" which so long served its purpose at the expense of—Latin. Recently I became curious to learn the name of a large flowering shrub bearing long, pendulous, purple or pinkish-purple blooms. Common though it was in villa gardens, no one could tell me. Then, seeing it in a particularly well-kept garden, I knocked at the front door. This man, I said, is a gardener. He was, for when I shot my question he beamed, and wrote down the name—*Buddleia verticillata*.

Veitchiana could only mean veitch- or vetch-like, but the word did not look like Latin. Nor was it Virgil and Cicero, I found, knew vetch as *vicia*. More gardeners' Latin! I could make nothing of *Buddleia*. Then, on a brain-ripple and a chance, I dived into the *Dictionary of National Biography* and in no time discovered that one Adam Buddle was a parson-botanist of considerable note at the beginning of the eighteenth century, he died in 1715 after writing a new and complete account of English flora now preserved in manuscript in the British Museum. Finally, a hundred-years-old botany book confirmed my guess. *Buddleia* was the Rev Adam Buddle, vicar or rector of North Fambridge, Essex.

And, after all, I was wrong. *Veitchiana*, I have learned since, has nothing to do with veitch, or vetch, but everything to do with the once very well-known horticulture business of Messrs. Veitch, of Exeter. What I had not guessed was that the name celebrates both a botanist and a nurseryman, with the result that the shrub cannot be said to have one of its own!

In the index to *A Gardener's Testament* "Snowdrop" is dismissed with "see *Galanthus*." I saw, and learned that the earliest and simplest garden flower of the year is *Galanthus nivalis*, from the Greek *gala*, white, the Greek *anthos*, flower, and the Latin genitive of *nix*, snow.

This is the exquisite little flower which the angels in heaven and the humble on earth still call a Snowdrop Linnæus himself must have known it as *snødroppe*.



In my youth we talked of pinks They became carnations, and now Carnation is indexed "*see Dianthus Caryophyllis*" Long before it was a pink it was a gillyflower or sops-in-wine I dare no longer mention larkspur it has been promoted *delphinium* For Lily of the Valley "*see Convallaria majalis*" and forget that it was once "Our Lady's Tears" For Foxglove turn to Digitalis and never be so vulgar as to call it Witches' Fingers or Dead Men's Bells Even Miss Jekyll consistently refers in her text to Forget-me-not as "*Myosotis dissitiflora*," which suggests not so much Forget-me-not as "Forget it!" An alluring Munstead Wood photograph bears the title "A grass path in the wood overhung with *Cistus Ladam Ferus*" My hat! But in this matter of nomenclature I see Miss Jekyll as a good woman struggling, not always with success, against perversity It is pleasant to read "For the front rock edges there is London Pride, always one of the most beautiful of plants, although so common", her pen might so easily have slipped into *Saxifraga umbrosa* Not once, I think, does she call Sweet Pea *Lytharus odoratus*.

In short, the old names are for "happiness and repose of mind," the new for botanical 'gardens and places where they dry and press

THE CARPENTRY OF WORDS

A GREAT deal can be learned about the English language—about its kindly aids to style in prose and to beauty in verse—by a little study of compound words. These are not necessarily dictionary words, though thousands are. Many of them are "newly-weds." Any writer is at liberty to unify two words with a view to exact expression and literary effect. He may do it well or ill—that is his own risk. Done well, this verbal dovetailing can be an original and beautiful extension of dictionary English, it can join two words in such a way that they form a new single word or epithet which conveys an apter, larger, more pregnant meaning than they could convey separately, if at all. The alchemist's crucible has a counterpart in the verbal glue-pot, and of the two the humbler vessel gives the surer results.

When we join two previously unrelated words with a hyphen we join them in some sort of wedlock. In itself the hyphen is no more than the wedding-ring before the best man hands it to the bridegroom. But it can become not less symbolic and potent. It is much above a mark of punctuation, it does not punctuate, it welds.

Failure to see this accounts for its frequent misplacement by people who are not quick to see the difference between a *superfluous hair-remover* and a *superfluous-hair remover* (see p 15) Here, I am concerned with word-coupling as a device capable of giving pith and moment to common words in prose and, in the hands of a master, of suddenly transmuting prose into poetry



Even on the level of mere convenience, time-saving, and snappiness, the compound word can be immensely useful *Dog-tired* conveys the intended meaning both more quickly and logically than "tired as a dog" This is true of innumerable compound words that are on everyone's tongue—for example

top-heavy
dull-eyed
shop-soiled
home-made
tongue-tied

good-hearted
go-between
heavy-handed
life-giving
week-end

It is even more true of compounds in which the hyphen is dropped because neither the eye nor the brain needs it. Such words are.

upkeep
moonlight
whitebait
drawback
outcast

shortcoming
penknife
highbrow
undergo
downstairs

This need of verbal *glue* increases as the world becomes more and more "full of a number of things" Consider how many words are saved and yet how meaning is increased, not diminished, in that recently coined phrase, "*all-in* wrestling." One may commend the word without loving the thing



It is remarkable that the higher uses of the compound word were recognized only 350 years ago by one of our greatest English poets Chaucer and Langland had used them to express common ideas as in *coal-black*, *sheep-skins*, *wood-craft*, *grey-hound*, *ship-men*, *weather-wise*, and *red-sparkling* But Spenser did not merely join words, he turned carpentry into magic It has been said by Dr Mackail that Shakespeare's ideas are *simultaneous* where in ordinary minds they would be consecutive But in his acute study, *The Formation of Compound Words*,¹ Mr. Bernard Groom points out that this concurrence of ideas is found in varying degrees in all true poets, and this explains their "passionate quest of terms more concentrated than those of ordinary speech"

Spenser used many compound words of his own coinage in his *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579) and more abundantly in *Faerie Queene*. The

¹ Society for Pure English, Tract 49 (Clarendon Press)

poetic compound word was not, of course, his invention, but he set up a tradition in English poetry which nothing has broken. Until he wrote of "heart-wounding love," Cynthia's "ever-drooping head," "sea-shouldering whales" (an epithet that threw Keats into an ecstasy), and the "rosy-fingered morn" this verbal magic had been unknown in England. And it seems probable that his consecrated use of compound words encouraged their introduction into ordinary prose and speech. The device "caught on." Thus he described the bat as "leather-winged." This was poetic diction. Two and a half centuries later, Dickens wrote in the *Pickwick Papers* "Here the leather-leggined boy laughed very heartily, and then tried to look as if it was somebody else, whereat Mr Winkle frowned majestically." Because Spenser wrote beautifully of "the rosy-fingered morn," Scott and Thackeray could describe pickpockets as "the light-fingered gentry."



Shakespeare gave to the double word in drama a power and suppleness that Spenser had not achieved, Milton made noble use of it. It is conspicuous in the most popular single poem in the language. "*the ivy-mantled tower*," "*incense-breathing morn*," "*the straw-built shed*," "*some hoary-headed swain*," "*the long-drawn aisle*"

Mr Groom is right, I think, to say that Shakespeare used the compound epithet to get dramatic energy rather than poetic charm, though to this tendency there are many exceptions in the Plays. He well describes his use of it as "amazingly bold, varied, felicitous, and unequal." He finds "noteworthy" the epithet which Edgar, in the great Dover Cliff scene in *King Lear*, applies to the skylark, when he says to Gloucester

*From the dread summit of this chalky bourn,
Look up a-height, the shrill-gorged lark
So far cannot be seen or heard*

Noteworthy, yes, but "shrill-gorged" is rather poetically true than truly poetical. Some of Shakespeare's confections might be described as clumsily strong: "merchant-marring rocks," "heavy-thick," "precious-princely," "toad-spotted traitor," and they can be as gluey as "ten-times-barr'd-up" chest, and the "ne'er-yet-beaten horse of Parthia." Such compounds have none of the charm of the "spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife," "death-counterfeiting sleep," "lazy-pacing clouds," "green-eyed jealousy," "the temple-haunting martlet," "lack-lustre eye," or that phrase which Mr Groom says helps to create the atmosphere of *The Tempest*.

*Safely in harbour
Is the King's ship; in the deep nook, where once
Thou call'dst me up at midnight to fetch dew
From the STILL-VEX'D Bermoothes.*

DUTCH AND "DOUBLE DUTCH"

The simplest and most felicitous of all Shakespeare's epithets in this kind is perhaps found in Lorenzo's words to Jessica when he points to the stars above them

*There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the YOUNG-EYED cherubins*

Here no other adjective, single or double, can be considered for a moment "Young-eyed" is perfect

Milton's double gems—his "*thick-warbled notes*," "*wide-watered shore*," "*gray-hooded Even*," "*coral-paven bed*," "*flowery-kirtled Naiades*," "*pure-ey'd Faith—white-handed Hope*," and many more—need only to be quoted

Yet "white-handed Hope" and "top-hatted stockbroker" are of one construction

DUTCH AND "DOUBLE DUTCH"

THE MYSTERY OF THE "NETHERLANDS"

WHERE and what are the Netherlands? Few English people could give any but vague answers to this question. Most would no doubt answer that the Netherlands are Holland and that you can find Holland in any good map of Holland. But the late Mr. F. M. Knobel, a former representative of The Hague in China, would have been angry.

To begin with, ought one to say Netherlands or Netherland? Mr Hart Maze put this question to Mr Knobel and then communicated his reply to the *Belfast News-Letter*. It will be seen that the diplomatist enlarges the question to take in the terms, Holland, Hollander, Dutch and Dutchman. Here is the gist of that reply

“Certainly your letter interests me, were it only because I always feel a sort of a pang when I hear or see ‘Holland’ used for my country ‘*Holland*’ *does not exist*. One province of our country is called ‘North Holland,’ another one ‘South Holland.’ As to your question, I may give as my opinion the following the strict official name is ‘Netherlands,’ but ‘Netherland’ is nearly as good and very much used by ourselves ‘Dutch’ is rendered a little awkward by ‘Dutch courage,’ ‘Dutch wife,’ etc., a proof that Britishers and Netherlands have known each other for centuries”

This is interesting, but we English will go on talking about Holland, instead of the Netherlands, for the simple reason that we know what the first term means but can never be sure of the second.



Even the Oxford English Dictionary does not seem to be clear. It defines “Netherlander” as, “a native of the Netherlands, sometimes restricted to Holland, sometimes made to include Belgium.” The truth is that the history of the countries we

now call Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Friesland, etc., has been so chequered, and there have been so many exchanges and overlappings of nomenclature, that no one now attaches a precise meaning to "Netherlands" whether he uses the term himself or hears it used. The name was long ago Englished as "The Low Countries," a term no longer used because no one knows what it means. "Netherlands," however, has survived, but only, I think, in royal or diplomatic contexts, as a name for Holland. More often than not it vaguely suggests to the English reader Holland, Belgium, Flanders, Hainault, Brabant, Friesland, etc. To-day we speak simply of Holland and Belgium.



"Dutch," as applied to the customs and people of Holland, is firmly fixed in the English language and has passed into our picturesque or humorous idioms. Yet "Dutch" is actually the German *deutsche*, and its old meaning is Low German. As Mr. Knobel says, our queer uses of "Dutch" prove that we British and his Netherlanders have known each other—favourably and unfavourably—for centuries. The Dutch (or Low German) language gave our forefathers the ear-ache, hence "double Dutch" became our irreverent synonym for gibberish, while to "talk double Dutch backwards on a Sunday" was a guttural

convulsion. To talk to a person "like a Dutch uncle" is to talk to him with a sort of incoherent severity. A Dutch auction is one in which a high price for an article is demanded and then allowed to tumble downstairs into a fair one. A Dutch bargain is one-sided. Dutch comfort is the sort of comfort Job got from his friends. "It might be worse." Dutch courage is supposed to be inspired by strong drink. A croaking frog is a Dutch nightingale minus a Keats. When we feel sure of a thing we say, "Or I'm a Dutchman." Why? The late Mr. Albert Chevalier referred to his spouse affectionately as "My old dutch." Most people who heard him translated "dutch" into "duchess," but Albert the Great knew better and explained that he referred to the likeness between the spouse's face and an old Dutch clock—a solution which I accept with becoming reluctance.

WORDS AND THEIR WAYS

WORDS have wills of their own They do not only possess meanings, they acquire new ones, they mean different things in different contexts, they die out and are saved from the dead, there is no end to their changes For example "a certain number" means an uncertain number In this chapter a number of "tricky" words are considered

Right—left

One would think that right and left are as plainly opposed to each other as black and white, yet unlike black and white they can easily be mistaken for each other A learned professor proposed a few years ago to the British Association that the course of the Thames through London should be straightened He would have it wind no more Its windings, which are as many and ancient as they are beautiful, have been sung by poets and brushed by painters But he would have Drayton's "glorious bow" between the Cities of Westminster and London as taut as a bow-string It is true that those great curves, so gentle in appearance, often defeat one's notions

of right and left A river's right bank is on its right as it flows to the sea There are many points from which St Paul's Cathedral seems to be on the right bank (i.e. the Surrey side) of the Thames A stranger might cross a bridge expecting to find it in Southwark or Bermondsey Naturally we think of the Thames as flowing from west to east So it does in large, but it flows due north under Westminster Bridge, and it is dangerous to tell a Londoner that Hyde Park Corner is a shade south of Waterloo Station A writer in the London *Evening News* has found that bewilderment begins as high up-stream as Richmond, where he met a gentleman who was heading along the towpath to Twickenham Ferry under the impression that he would soon reach Kew Gardens "Never, I told him, unless you turn back " Again, "You might think that it is easy to tell up-river from down-river by looking at the stream A stranger probably would do that, and yet he might place the sea on the wrong side of London, for, if an inlander, he would not allow for the tide " I do not know whether I am ashamed, or not ashamed, to say that in five or six early visits to Paris I mistook the direction in which the Seine was flowing past the Louvre to the sea I think I was hazed by the "Left Bank."

"Right," and "left," have no meaning except

in relation to a *known* direction, but people forget this *Just outside Brighton Central Station there used to be a big painted street-plan on a house wall, intended to guide arriving visitors down from the station to the sea, piers, and aquarium. Two ripe Brighton men—one a nut-hard trader, the other a horsey landlord, independently told me that this street-plan was a municipal curiosity. They said that all the side streets on the right of the artery were shown on the left, and all the streets on the left were shown on the right (What they said about the corporation is less reportable.) I took an early opportunity to look at this plan, and found it perfectly correct. But my friends were more startled than pleased when I told them that all they had to do, when they next took a view, was to stand on their heads.

The most flexible word

The word *canny* is perhaps the most versatile word in the language. A medical witness, giving evidence recently, explained his hesitation in answering certain questions by saying, "I am obliged to speak cannily." He meant cautiously, warily. In Northumberland and Durham you find these usages:

To an invalid: "How are you feeling now?"
 "Oh, canny," meaning not so bad, fairly easy.

In cricket "a little canny un," i.e. a nice slow ball

"How big is it?" "Oh, a canny size," i.e. fairly big, biggish, on the other hand, it is often used to indicate something small

To these shades of meaning the following may be added

Careful in worldly affairs "the caution of a canny Scotchman"

Careful in the sense of thrifty "Be canny with the sugar"

Quiet, sly, pawky Thus Burns, in his song, "Rattlin' Roaring Willie" "he cannily keekit ben" i.e. he cannily peeped in

Pleasing to the eye, comely, winsome, nice, tidy, etc., as in "Canny Newcassel, the Pride of the North"

Slow and cautious in action, as in "Ca' canny!" and in "Canny, now, lad—tak' time"

It will be seen that "canny" is both a Scotch and a North of England word. It is a very shibboleth on Tyneside

Curiously enough, while "canny" is seldom "literary" English, its negative, "uncanny" is never anything else

Certain—uncertain

A "certain number" is an uncertain number. "To a certain extent" means to an uncertain extent. "A certain age" is defined by the Oxford

English Dictionary as "an age when one is no longer young, but which politeness forbids to be specified too definitely—say between 40 and 60 " The phrase is, of course, usually applied to a woman, as by Byron in *Beppo*

*She was not old, nor young, nor at the years
Which certain people call a certain age,
Which yet the most uncertain age appears*

Dickens, in *Barnaby Rudge*, gets both meanings into one sentence " a very old house, perhaps as old as it is claimed to be, and perhaps older, as will sometimes happen with houses of an uncertain, as with ladies of a certain, age "

What is a decade?

A Singapore correspondent wrote

"The Federated Malay States Railways, here a Government department, describe a statement of account they send out every ten days, as a decade account My dictionary, a very poor one, says of decade 'Noun, an aggregate of ten, ten years '

"To me, decade means ten years and nothing more An accountant friend, who is also an M A , merely commented, when I asked his opinion, that decade was a noun, as an adjective its use was new to him But what have you to say?"

The mere fact that a word is ordinarily a noun does not preclude its adjectival use, as in boot shop, trumpet call, music stool, book shelf, etc.

Therefore, on that score, "decade account" is good English. It is not even wrong on the score of radical meaning, because "decade" means ten of *anything*. You could say (I do not advise it) that So-and-so has written a decade of novels, i.e. ten novels, or that "After a decade of centuries."

In practice, and by custom, *decade* now means ten years, and a decade account or report is one that covers that period.

Intransigent—intransigence

These words, beloved by writers of leading articles, came into English use about fifty years ago. They are French words, derived from the Latin *trans*, across, and *agere*, to act. By this time both ought to have been completely Englished—on the analogy of *intelligent* and *intelligence*.

More important is it to get their meaning right, and apparently the pundits of the Press, to whom they mainly owe their English existence, are so fond of their sound as to have become careless of their sense. They have forgotten that the syllable *in* is not the intensive *in* (as in "introduce") but the negative *in* (as in "indivisible"), and the word *intransigent* represents refusal to come over to the other side to make terms, refusal to compromise.

Political commentators must be allowed their fine words, but it is not easy to see that "intransigent" fills a definite vacancy in our language. Words like "stubborn," "implacable," "irreconcilable," "recalcitrant," and others meet most, if not all, needs, though, of course, "intransigent" may be a more impressive word in the morning papers

Cheap

THIS word has now two meanings which often get in the way of each other. Originally it was a noun and meant a bargain, buying and selling, a market. These meanings survive in the names, Eastcheap and Cheapside. The old expression "Good cheap," indicating a good bargain, good value, on easy terms, etc., gave birth to the adjective "cheap" and the adverb "cheaply" at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

What cost little money came to be regarded as more or less worthless or paltry with the result that *cheap* was made an adjective in these senses. As early as 1674 Lord Clarendon wrote of "the cheap laughter of all illiterate men." Dr Johnson in his *London* satire had "The cheap reward of empty praise." Shakespeare in the *Comedy of Errors* had made one of his characters say, "I hold your dainties cheap, sir, and your welcome dear," i.e. I despise both. This meaning of "cheap" is both old and current English.

Some confusion there undoubtedly is. One can even blend the two meanings in the paradoxical statement that "the cheapest goods are the dearest," meaning the dearest in the long run—as wearing badly or deteriorating quickly. The best alternative to "cheap" (opposite to dear) is "inexpensive."

In the expression "cheap and nasty" the two meanings of cheap seem to be blended.

Heighth

I was once asked by several readers whether there is such a word as "heighth", and whether it is good English. One correspondent charitably wrote "I will say nothing about 'heighth' as you will probably hear a lot about it from other correspondents. But it is well, perhaps, that Homer should sometimes nod!" It did not occur to me that anyone would suppose that I was ignorantly substituting "heighth" for "height." Nor does it now occur to me that Milton nodded when, in his majestic opening of *Paradise Lost*, he wrote

*What in me is dark,
Illumine, what is low raise and support,
That, to the heighth of this great argument,
I may assert Eternal Providence*

depth of thy eternal ways " "Coolth" (coolness) is now almost obsolete, but it and "heighth" remain good English, capable of revival in certain moods and contexts, especially in poetry Each has a modern counterpart in "drouth" (drought)

The editorial "we"

This is a journalistic convention with a good basis It represents the collective wisdom of a newspaper which itself appeals to the collective wisdom of, say 999,999 readers. The editor who should try, every day of the year, to address that certified number of citizens in the first person would be both egoist and egotist "We" is his device for suppressing his ego and at the same time magnifying his power, it saves his modesty and banishes his diffidence But it becomes ridiculous when mismanaged, as in "If we were a policeman . . ." or "Whenever we consult our dentist . . ."

Thackeray denounced such substitutes for "I" as "the present writer," "the undersigned." The most convenient evasion is by the use of the impersonal "one," as in "One may venture to doubt . . .," "One revolts from the suggestion . . ."

We, it should be noted, may also stand for the common man, people in general, as in "We are

apt to forget " Or for the whole nation, as in "We are laughed at, but imitated, by half the world "

When "quite" means "not quite"

Quite is a curious word "Quite right" and "quite wrong" mean wholly right and wholly wrong But "quite quiet" does not usually mean utterly quiet, any more than "quite good" usually means faultlessly good "Quite" is frequently used, strangely enough, not to emphasize but to moderate, thus, in the police-court a prisoner is described as having been "quite quiet" because he might have been expected to be quite noisy

When we say that So-and-so made "quite a good speech," we do not mean a perfect speech, and a man who says he is "quite well" is not saying that he is as well as he could possibly be—he means well enough to be satisfied with himself Many of these little illogicalities arise from the fact that in speaking or writing we have not merely to express our thoughts—we have to take into account the probable thoughts and mental expectations of those we are addressing. Language is not one of the exact sciences

"Quite all right" is a vulgar colloquialism unfit for written English—either "all" or "quite" being superfluous.

A libellous verb?

An engineer wrote to me "Can you explain why newspaper writers are becoming so fond of using the verb 'to engineer' when they describe some particularly dirty piece of work? Strikes, political plots, burglaries, and assassinations are nowadays always 'engineered' by their organizers. As an engineer myself, I must protest against this reflection on our methods of work."

When a newspaper writer thus uses the word "engineer" he is not thinking of engineers at all, nor do his readers take the word in that way. The figurative meaning of "to engineer," fully recognized by the Oxford English Dictionary, is to arrange, contrive, or plan. It is so used by Cowper. A quotation is given from the *St James's Gazette* in 1884 "Party engineering and the trickery of elections." Moreover, "enginous" (now obsolete) meant clever, crafty, cunning, deceitful. As early as 1420 it was written. "In his court was a false traitor that was a great engineer" (I have only slightly modified the spelling), and in a book of 1611 occurs the phrase, "the devil's engineers." There were few professional "engineers" then.

But the usage does not reflect on the engineering profession any more than "doctored," in the sense of adulterated, reflects on the medical profession. The application of a word cannot be

controlled We call an untrustworthy fellow a "sweep" "Old soldier" is not the honourable title it deserves to be The French call a small-minded conventional man *épiciier* (grocer) A bad rider rides "like a tailor" Hatters are mad And publishing, on the authority of Lord Byron, is supposed to have been the occupation of Barabbas No harm is done

Is a spade a spade?

A Judge of the King's Bench was recently moved to denounce, or at least to deprecate, the growing use of fine words for common things A Corporation driver had corrected the Court when his vehicle was described by counsel as a dust-cart He protested that it was a *freighter* The Judge sighed and said "We talk so delicately now" One has a certain sympathy with that driver, he glorified his dust-cart Philologically, however, the substitution of "freighter" is bad, because freighter gives no indication of the freight carried



Such refinements of speech are increasing rapidly A workhouse is now an "institution," a lunatic asylum is a "mental hospital," a warder prefers to be called a "prison officer." I am told that a great Dublin bank calls its clerks "officers"

—no doubt to their satisfaction—though my informant added that once, when a messenger was sent to find a member of the staff, and asked in a probable place, “Have any of our officers been here this morning?” the landlord replied, “Yes, one of your officers left a few minutes ago, with his sword behind his ear ”



The injunction to call a spade a spade was directed against some mythical person who called it “an agricultural implement for the trituration of the soil ” Plain speech may be carried too far, as the Vicar found when he reproved a navvy whose language was more plain than polite “I always call a spade a spade, sir ” “No,” said the Vicar, “for the last twenty minutes you have been calling it a bloody shovel ” It is curious that in common speech “spade” does not make a verb, but “shovel” does; nor can a man with a spade be called a “spader”—whereas a man with a shovel—well, one remembers Mr Punch’s down-and-out who humbly called himself, to the magistrate, a “snow-shoveller’s labourer ” Among such (improved?) designations, I am puzzled by that common one, “Practical Chimney Sweep,” never having met with a Theoretical or Consulting chimney sweep, but of all occupational “styles” the queerest and least attractive is the

American "mortician" for "undertaker" Here the attempt to be delicate seems to produce indelicacy—as it certainly did when a Los Angeles gentleman was described, in terms of honour, as "mortician to all the best movie-stars' husbands"

The vice of pomposity still infects newspaper English Words that are good in themselves are given petty work to do Fowler (*Modern English Usage*) instances "beverage," "collation," "emporium," "condiment," "edifice," "divagation," "exacerbate," and "spouse" The list is a long one

"Issued with boots"

Can anyone be "issued with" anything? Yes, a regiment or crew or organized party can be issued with boots, blankets, ammunition—all sorts of things In the British Army a distribution to troops has long been called an *issue*, but the Oxford English Dictionary cites no use of the word as a verb earlier than 1925, when T G Bruce wrote (in his *Fight for Everest*), "Every man in the Expedition was issued with one blanket" The meaning, of course, is, "To every man in the Expedition one blanket was issued," which can be read as "Every man was blanket-issued." In civilian language the usage has no place A pert reader asked me whether a man can be issued *without* blankets. I invited him to call and see.

What is an anachronism?

An anachronism usually means the placing of a custom or thing in a period when it was not yet known. It is an anachronism to portray any of the apostles at the Lord's Supper wearing spectacles, but this was done by a great painter.

A deliberate revival is not, of course, an anachronism. But if, without explanation, the printers of this book were to adopt the "long" (German) s that would be called an anachronism. Similarly, an old and exploded theory, such as that our earth is flat, can justly be described as *anachronistic*.

An anachronism, being simply a wrong timing (mis-chronology), can be committed by either ante-dating what did not exist, or post-dating what no longer exists.

Straight—strait

"Strait" is almost archaic, but is still put to a few special uses. Thus one should write of "straitened circumstances", "straightened circumstances" would have an almost opposite meaning. "Strait" is more figurative than "straight," as in "strait-laced."

Pastiche

Of this word, now much in vogue, a correspondent complained. "It is what I should call,

in my ignorance, a superior sort of word—much used by ‘superior’ writers, and as such it irritates me ” I understand my correspondent’s feeling, but “pastiche” is now accepted as an English word The O E D defines it as “a medley of various ingredients, a hotchpotch, farrago, jumble ” It ought not, however, to be used in everyday senses “Pastiche” is a semi-technical art term Thus an opera or other musical composition, made up in some kind of sequence from works by various hands, is a pastiche A picture combining the styles or features of other pictures, or confessedly imitated from one or more of these, is a pastiche The word is Italian in origin

WHAT IS A “BRITISHER”?

ONE would hardly think that we should have to ask each other this question, yet it is often raised, and there seems to be general uncertainty in the matter

Even *Briton* has a certain vagueness A Briton is, properly speaking, a native of Great Britain, and the designation is often extended to a British subject in the Empire When applied to people who, though British *subjects*, are not of *British* blood it becomes a confusing and unsatisfactory term. Most often it is now used in a heroic, poetical way, as in such an invocation as

Tennyson's "Britons, hold your own!" and such phrases as "to work like a Briton "

"Britisher" is on quite another footing, being a name given to us, not made by us. It is believed to have been first used in the United States. Professor Freeman, the historian, thought it arose during the War of Independence when the Americans spoke of us as "British," not English. Thus Britisher became the slangy noun corresponding with the adjective. In his *Impressions of the United States*, he wrote—"I always told my American friends that I had rather be called a Britisher than an Englishman, if by calling me an Englishman they meant to imply that they were not Englishmen themselves."

The Englishman who calls himself a Britisher uses a needless term which has been well described as an "odious vulgarism."

DOES THE EXCEPTION PROVE THE RULE?

THIS question is often raised by thoughtful readers. The brief form in which the saying is printed above is misleading because people are apt to take the verb "prove" in the sense of demonstrate. The exception demonstrates only the existence of the rule, not its correctness or validity.

The true form of this old legal maxim, is "*Exceptio probat regulam in casibus non exceptis*" (The exception proves, or confirms, the rule in the cases not excepted), which is more exact. But here the verb "prove" means to test, to make trial of, to examine. It is in this sense that the word is nearly always used in the Authorized Version of the Bible "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." Of course, "prove" does also mean to demonstrate the truth of a matter, and misunderstanding arises when the one meaning is read for the other. A printer's "proof" does not demonstrate its own correctness, it is a trial impression submitted for the very purpose of correction. Not infrequently "exception" has very much the force of a demur. This is its sense in the phrase, "take exception to," i.e. object to, disapprove, the objection *tests* the strength and applicability of the rule.

IF OR WHETHER?

THE use of *if* where *whether* seems to be demanded or at least preferable is frequent. A literary adviser wrote to a would-be poet "These firms will tell you if your poems stand a sporting chance." "If" should have been "whether." Had the sentence been "If your poems stand a sporting chance these firms will tell you so," it

A DEAD LANGUAGE

would have been correct But unlike *whether*, *if* does not expect a Yes or No reply The two different implications are brought together in such a sentence as, "If he comes, I shall ask him whether he approves"

True, Dean Alford, in his Victorian book, *The Queen's English*, says that the use of *if* for *whether*, to which I am objecting, is found in our best writers, and that he cannot see that there is anything to complain of in it The "best writers" quoted by the Dean are Matthew Prior and Dr Johnson, in each instance from a poem But poetry does not supply safe models for everyday prose He quotes, also, Genesis viii, 8 "Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground," but here, I suggest, the occasion was too great and unprecedented for *whether* (i.e. whether or not) To an occasion without precedent and purely speculative, *if* is more appropriate

A DEAD LANGUAGE

WHEN we speak of the Dead Languages we mean Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, etc But a living language comes to have dead languages within itself To most people the English pure and undefiled of Chaucer is unintelligible But Chaucer is five centuries old and his English is not dead but

only developed If you doubt that a whole species of English can pass out of use, read Pierce Egan's *London Life*, which is little more than a century and a quarter old, and you will discover that his English has gone with the times he lived in his words have passed with his world

Take, however, the English of the Prize Ring What a vocabulary it had, and how it has been polished away! The punch seems to have gone out of Bruiser's speech He no longer breathes fire and slaughter before the event, on the contrary he is respectful to his antagonist and so modest about his own claims to victory as to become, for a Bruiser, almost abject When, a few years ago, Messrs Petersen and Pettifer were asked, separately, what they thought of their prospects at Olympia, each vied with the other in gentle deprecation of personal prowess and victory

It was not ever thus Not even ten or twenty years ago Exchanges of scorn and defiance began a month before the event—like the first tremors of an earthquake—and one became agreeably perturbed The *locus classicus* in this kind of rhetoric is Mark Twain's story, in *Huckleberry Finn*, of the nocturnal happenings on a keel-boat manned by Mississippi toughs. Huck saw and overheard the debate, which originated in some

literary criticism of fourteen verses, repeated by their author and voted to be "kind of poor" A fight was considered to be in order, and Bob, the biggest man there, jumped up and shouted "Set whar you are gentlemen Leave him to me, he's my meat" Then he jumped up in the air, cracking his heels together three times, and continued

"Whoo-oo! I'm the old original iron-jawed, brass-mounted, copper-bellied corpse-maker from the wilds of Arkansaw Look at me! I'm the man they call Sudden Death and General Desolation

"Whoo-oo! Stand back and give me room according to my strength! Blood's my natural drink, and the wails of the dying is music to my ear! Cast your eye on me, gentlemen!—and lay low and hold your breath, for I'm about to turn myself loose!"

He ended, and straightway another gentleman took the floor and said

"Whoo-oo! bow your neck and spread, for the kingdom of sorrow's a-coming! Hold me down to the earth, for I feel my powers a-working! Whoo-oo! I'm a child of sin, don't let me get a start! Smoked glass here, for all! Don't attempt to look at me with the naked eye, gentlemen! Contemplate me through leather—*don't* use the naked eye" He jumped up and cracked his heels together three times before he lit, and as he came down he shouted out "Whoo-oo! bow your neck and spread, for the pet child of Calamity's a-coming!"

The fight itself is not recorded, for when Bob had knocked the Child of Calamity's hat off, and the Child had knocked Bob's off, there was an intervention by "a little black-whiskered chap," who rose and said quietly "Come here, you couple of chicken-livered cowards, and I'll thrash the two of ye!" And he did

These brave days are gone, and with them, as I have said, a whole vocabulary of robust English. To-day, when the Camberwell Beauty delivers a blow on the Gunner's nose, we are no longer told that he dotted him on the claret jug, or (in the eye) that he closed his mince, or (in the stomach) that his sinister mauley reached the bread-basket. To land a punch on the chin is now, if you please, to "connect" with that organ. It is a saddening decline, and particularly to those who, like myself, have never seen a prize-fight but in words

THE "UNBEND" MYSTERY

I HAVE remarked in another page that words are capable of monkey tricks. Consider the word *unbend*. A correspondent asked me to denounce the almost universal use of this word by novelists. He had been enraged by finding so good a writer, as Samuel Butler (in *The Way of All Flesh*) writing, "Then the great man unbent."

SLANG AS POETRY

He continued "I have actually met it in the aggravated form of the following nonsense *He was a stern and unbending old man, but he could unbend on occasion* This choice specimen of literary English I came across in the work of an author of repute, but he sinned in good company, for they all do it Only, one would think that the very form of the complete sentence would have shown him, had he taken a moment's thought, that the verb in the second half should be 'bend'" But did my correspondent ever suffer from lumbago!

SLANG AS POETRY

THE reason why language is always changing is that people will not leave it alone And the reason why they will not is that they *cannot* Not only are new words wanted, in a hurry, for new things, but old words for old things are continually being supplanted by high-spirited, humorous, picturesque, socially useful words which fly like sparks from the anvils of life

The process never stops G K Chesterton described it thus "The one stream of poetry which is constantly flowing is slang Every day some nameless poet weaves some fairy tracery of popular language . All slang is metaphor, and all metaphor is poetry The world of slang is a kind of topsy-turvydom of poetry, full

of blue moons and white elephants, of men losing their heads, and men whose tongues run away with them—a whole chaos of fairy tales ”

It is true that slang words are continuously being dropped and forgotten, but their number is not diminished, “still glides the river and will for ever glide ” A word may come into the widest daily use, and a year or two later be hardly a memory I remember when a dude, fop, swell, lady-killer, suddenly became a “masher ” Mr Eric Partridge defines this fifty-year dead word as “a well-dressed man notably successful with the ‘sex’ ”—so successful that he was credited with *mashing* their hearts To “make a mash” was to make a Lotharian conquest The term, like so many slang words, was borrowed from another sphere, in this case from the kitchen (mashed potatoes) or from a “mash of tea,” which was a common phrase in north-country restaurants



G K C’s account of slang, however, is more picturesque than informing. What is slang? What is its inwardness? If I were compelled to describe it shortly, I think I might say that slang is experimental language One authority has expressed a doubt whether any exact definition is possible Another has described it as “a

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peculiar kind of vagabond language, always hanging^o on the outskirts of legitimate speech, but continually straying or forcing its way into the most respectable company," which usefully enough likens slang to a linguistic gate-crasher

There is no doubt that sheer playfulness and even mischief are responsible for a great deal of slang. After all, words are everyone's property, and everyone is minded to do what he likes with his own. Much of the ingenuity expended is weak and wayward. In a hotel lounge, I once saw hanging on the wall this printed notice

WYBMADIHAY'

On inquiry I learned that its author did not expect to convey anything to the hotel customers, but merely to induce them to ask for an interpretation and then for—something else. The letters might be taken to be some sort of variant of "back" or "medial" slang. They are initial ones and their meaning is "Will you buy me a drink if I ask you?" This seems to have some affinity to Z1ph, which Mr Eric Partridge, in his excellent *Slang To-day and Yesterday*, explains as gibberish formed by inserting any consonant between every two syllables. Thus, if the letter adopted is F the result is called "the F gibberish," if G, it is "the G gibberish" which

converts "How do you do?" into *Howg dog youg dog?* But this is nearer to cant¹ than to slang

Mr Partridge treats Lewis Carroll's "port-manteau" words as a kind of slang. His verb to *gimble* is to gamble nimbly, his *gallumph* to gallop triumphantly

*He left it dead, and with its head
He went gallumphing back*

A Carroll word that has established itself virtually as standard English is *chortle* (chuckle—snort). *Bakerloo* is now as real as Baker Street and Waterloo

THE SPLIT INFINITIVE

AMONG the shapes of things to come I think we may confidently foresee the split infinitive as good English, forbidden by no rule, but guided, in use, by taste and common sense. The ban on it is lifting for the very good reason that it is seen to be a restraint on language.

An infinitive is said to be split when an adverb or an adverbial phrase is placed between "to" and the verb. Thus *to clearly understand* is a split infinitive. Yet it is more natural and convenient than "clearly to understand" or "to understand clearly." The purists, however, insist that the infinitive must never be split. The middle way is to split rather than awkwardly dodge, or, as Fowler (*Modern English Usage*) puts it, "We will split the infinitive sooner than be ambiguous or artificial."

A rabid objector to the split infinitive will see one that is not in his path at all. Thus he will recoil from writing "to be fully convinced" or "to be clearly understood," under the impression that he would be splitting infinitives. He would be doing nothing of the sort, because the infinitive is completed in "to be" and he would split it only if he wrote "to fully be convinced," "to clearly be understood."

The danger of *not* splitting the infinitive in some circumstances is amusingly illustrated by Dr Jespersen (*Essentials of English Grammar*). He instances "a vicious back-hander which I failed *to entirely avoid*" Here the infinitive is split. If, to save splitting, you write "*a vicious back-hander which I failed entirely to avoid*," the reader may think your failure to avoid the blow was complete, that you took the knock-out. Again, "He made up his mind *to once more propose* to her" implies that he has proposed to her before, whereas "He *once more* made up his mind *to propose* to her" implies no such thing, and "He made up his mind once more to propose to her" is ambiguous.

The upshot is that when it is convenient to split the infinitive, and when it can be done neatly, no offence is committed and the supposed rule against it is honoured more in the breach than the observance. In the following phrases the splitting adverbs give no just cause of offence.

to clearly understand
to fully realize
to flatly refuse
to fully appreciate
to thankfully receive
to cautiously inquire
to quietly await
to cordially greet

THE SPLIT INFINITIVE

to wholly agree
to gladly consent
to wilfully offend
to again meet
to quickly restore
to stoutly defend
to definitely assert
to promptly reply

These and a hundred like phrases have passed into the language and cannot be treated as stowaways. As for a *clumsily* split infinitive, it is sufficiently condemned by its clumsiness.

LOGIC NOTWITHSTANDING

ARE THERE DEGREES OF PERFECTION?

MANY people worry about the little illogicalities that abound in accepted English. One of their favourite contentions is that the *absolute* can have no degrees, and therefore such expressions as "truer," "more correct," "very sincerely," "utmost limit," "very best" are wrong. One of these sticklers wrote to me: "There are no grades of truth." Not, perhaps, in the sight of heaven, but in the world as it is we are compelled to admit degrees of truth. The form of the oath administered to witnesses, binding them to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the

truth, is an admission that in life, though not in logic, there are degrees of truth. The phrase "a half truth" expresses something that is real in our experience and that can fitly be so described.

Language is not mathematics, neither can it be drilled in the goose-step. It is the human situation, the collision of circumstances, or of wills, that compels us to intensivate terms which in strict logic are already final. Hence the phrase "in very truth" (i.e. in true truth) is justified, and equally, such phrases as "It would be truer to say" "absolutely true," "more or less true," "broadly true," "partly true."



Many fine shades of meaning would be lost if this licence to *grade* the absolute were not permitted us. Consider Othello's words to the Duke and senators in the Council Chamber

*Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors
That I have ta'en away this old man's daughter,
It is most true, true I have married her;
The very head and front of my offending
Hath this extent, no more*

Here "most true" is not an illogical superlative of "true", it is an *artistic* superlative, charged with a moral quality that is not required in the "true" which indicates the mere fact of the marriage. What that quality is, must be plain to

any reader with the least sense of literary expression and of the drama that Shakespeare is unfolding. It is this moral or mental equation which often allows and sometimes compels illogicalities like "the very best," "the very next," "utmost limit," "quite right," etc. As for "yours *very* truly," "yours *very* sincerely," these expressions are too conventional for scrutiny or comment.

"Pure truth hath no man seen nor e'er shall know," said a Greek philosopher. "Falsehood is so near to truth that a wise man would do well not to trust himself on the narrow edge," said the greatest of Roman orators. It is impracticable to make truth a synonym of the whole truth. Indivisible truth is not for the children of men. A "true" doctrine is true only to those who think it true, the true facts of a case are those which have borne a certain competent investigation, the truth-teller is one who tells the truth as *he* sees it. We speak of truth as growing, if it grows it is at no time complete and therefore not absolute. Moreover, what is true is very often a matter of opinion, not of knowledge, and the natural response of a person of another opinion is "There is *some* truth in what you say," or, more sceptically, "There may be some particle of truth in it." These idioms are deep-rooted.

The same considerations apply to such so-called absolutes "correct," "excellent," "perfect" I have been urged to say that "very excellent" is wrong because the degrees of merit are "good," "very good," and "excellent"

The peak of merit might be "excellent" if human ambition were more easily satisfied, but the desire to "go one better than the best" is stronger than verbal logic

Not for a moment do I contend that we are entitled to abuse language for the sake of mere and frequent emphasis But one may stretch a point sometimes, as that old rhapsodist did when he exclaimed "Many daughters have done *excellently*, but thou *excellest them all*"

AUTHOR OR AUTHORESS?

A READER informed me that he had seen a woman writer of novels advertised as the *author* And he asked "Have we no word *authoress*?" We have, and I dislike it I can imagine few distinctions more superfluous than that between author and authoress, poet and poetess What has sex to do with authorship? Are we to refer to George Eliot as "one of the greatest of Victorian authoresses," thus limiting our tribute to the distaff side, and leaving our readers in doubt of what we mean? Must we write: "This book

has been attributed to Mrs —, but she never acknowledged her authoress-ship"? I opine not.

Henry Fowler, whose judgement in such matters I reverence but do not always accept, advocated (*Modern English Usage*) a more frequent use of such designations as *authoress*, *poetess*, *paintress*, even *doctress* and *inspectress*, on the ground that they enlarge and define our information. And there is something in this argument. But not much. Fowler was aware that women themselves object to be "sexed" when they appear as poets, authors, painters, doctors, etc. "Their view is that the female author is to raise herself to the level of the male author by asserting her right to his name." To this Fowler rather weakly retorts that the actress "is not known to resent the indication of her sex." No, her sex is her fortune, but a woman wishes to be an *author* like Jane Austen or George Sand, a *poet* like Sappho or Elizabeth Barrett Browning, a *painter* like Angelica Kauffman or Laura Knight.

The higher the vocation, the more spiritual its character, the less proper it seems to emphasize sex. To call a woman a poetess is as much as to call her a bad poet, to call her an authoress is to diminish her authority. Yet I would allow her to be a prophetess.

THE POSSESSIVE 'S AND S'

THE correct use or omission of the possessive puzzles many people. Should one add 's to St James, Douglas, etc., and thus get "St Jamesez," "Dougleasez," etc.? The answer is Yes. "St *James'* Palace," "Prince of *Wales'* feathers," are wrong.

When the last syllable of a word begins and ends with s we use the s' form "Moses' law." But if the word is a monosyllable the 's form is correct "Sims's bowling."

An inquirer objected that although "the rule seems straightforward enough, it gives rise to such awkward sayings as Saunders's (Saundersz) room, Simkins's (Simkinsez) house, Richards's (Richardsez) mount, etc. Are these correct?" Yes. There is not enough awkwardness to justify "Saunders' room," etc., and in speech "Richards'" is liable to be misunderstood. Say Richards's.

A question also rose whether there are any circumstances in which one writes 's and does not say it. "Is Griffiths's shot said as Griffiths' shot?" The right speech form is Griffiths's shot, though I suppose many people would shirk it. It is impossible to give rules that cover all cases. "Keats' poems" is ridiculous, but "Pears' soap" is said and written to avoid a triple sibilant.

THE BUGBEAR OF "QUANTITY"

Classical names are often shorn of the possessive *s* we say "Achilles' heel," but more often "the heel of Achilles" "Hercules'" and "Hercules's Labours" are always "the Labours of Hercules"

THE BUGBEAR OF "QUANTITY"

THE notion that English words derived from Latin or Greek should have their vowels pronounced long or short according as they were pronounced in these languages, is quite wrong. One might as well say that if a man buys a horse he must not clip its tail. When we turn a Latin word into an English one we are free to make it as English as we please. If we were bound by classical quantities we should say *Sōcrates*, but we choose to say *Sōcrates*, we should say *vertigo* (*vertyego*), but we say *vertigo*, and we say *deficit* though classically we ought to say *deficit*. In some words the root pronunciation and the off-shoot pronunciation are both used and neither can be called wrong. One may rhyme "ration" with "nation" or, as is done in the Army, with "passion". But to say *tribunal* or *communal* in obedience to Latin is pedantic.

ANIMALS AND "WHO"

"CARDINAL RICHELIEU amused himself with hosts of cats of whom he was very fond." Is the

relative personal pronoun *whom* correct in this sentence, or should "of which" have been written? It is a matter of taste, not of right or wrong. Where personality is imputed to an animal in sufficient degree you may *who* and *whom* that animal. In this instance "of whom" is justified by Richelieu's stated fondness for cats. The more they looked at the Cardinal the more the Cardinal was pleased. And since men and animals have known each other for a very long time the use of "who" in mention of a dog or a cat—even of a worm when it "turns"—is legitimate. This is especially true in poetry and in more or less humorous prose. Shakespeare makes Casca say to Cicero on the eve of Julius Caesar's doom, when there were strange portents in Rome:

*Against the Capitol I met a lion,
Who glared upon me, and went surly by*

If it be objected that this is the language of tragic poetry, what of Launce's taunt to Sebastian about the dog he had brought up from a puppy—"who is a dog as big as ten of yours"? In a single chapter of Dickens's *Uncommercial Traveller* we read "Behind Long Acre, two honest dogs live who perform in Punch's shows" . . . "We talk of men keeping dogs, but we might often talk more expressively of dogs keeping men; I know a bull-

MAY AND MIGHT

dog in a shy corner of Hammersmith *who* keeps a man” “There is a dog residing in the

Borough of Southwark *who* keeps a blind man ”

The application of the personal relative pronouns to animals is not automatically “incorrect ” All depends on how it is done

MAY AND MIGHT

MANY people are considerably puzzled by the usages of *may* and *might* “Might is the past tense of may, and yet I come across instances every day in written language of the contradictory use of these words In conversation one hears, ‘I *may* go to the dance’ from Mr A , while Mr B says, ‘I *might* go to the dance ’ And so on ”

But “might” is *not* always (or even often) the past tense of “may”! “I may go to the dance” and “I might go” are both in the present tense

Putting syntax aside, “I may go to the dance” and “I might go to the dance” mean slightly different things The first expresses a half-intention, the second a half-doubt “I might go” contemplates a bigger *if* Similarly, “Might I suggest?” expresses more diffidence than “May I suggest?” Again, *might* places a greater distance between the thought and the fact or event Thus, “You might think he was boss of this show” admits the improbability of your really thinking

it, whereas "You may think he is boss" suggests that you very likely do think so—mistakefily In these examples "may" and "might" differ in meaning but not in time But to confuse them may give awkward results "Are you going already? You might stay a little longer" Here, if *may* were used, the guest would go down the garden path in a huff

"COLLOQUIAL" AND "LITERARY" ENGLISH

COLLOQUIAL English may be defined as the spoken English of everyday life Literary English is the English of good writers Someone wrote "Bishop —— has a wise and human philosophy that we could do with more of in these days" The sentence, as it stands, is grammatical and clear But the first eight words are in literary English, the remaining ten are in colloquial English, and the two styles are not well blended or indeed blended at all In so short a sentence the first style had better have been maintained, as it could have been with an actual saving of words Thus "Bishop —— has a wise and human philosophy that we need in greater abundance to-day" Nothing was gained by the drop into colloquial expressions and prepositional untidiness

TO HAVE TO

Yet the colloquialisms in literary English are not to be condemned, on the contrary, they can give life and pith to writing which without it would be "coldly correct and critically dull " All depends on how it is done The appeal here is not to rule but to art

TO HAVE TO

FOREIGNERS' difficulties with English sometimes throw light on our own habits of speech A German asks why we say *have to* to express compulsion why not *must*

There is a shade of difference between "I have to do this" and "I must do this " The second of these expressions suggests concurrence in, or acceptance of, the obligation to "do this," whereas "I have to do this," though it may not exclude this willingness, is a simple statement of an obligation laid upon, and so *possessed by*, the speaker The idea of *possession* (as of a duty) is there In such a sentence as "We had no choice, we simply had to do it," the same verb is seen working first in its simple and then in its applied meaning

THE SUBJUNCTIVE FOG

To use or not to use the subjunctive mood is a question that puzzles many people A doubter wrote to me

I have frequently read and heard the following "I wish I was rich," "If I was to give," etc. Some of these sentences have been uttered by characters, supposed to be of the upper class, and of good education, drawn in books. The word *were* seems correct to me, but as I found the sentences in print, that circumstance has raised doubts in my mind."

Let me say, in passing, that nothing should be accepted as right or wrong because it is "in print." Print is handwriting in another form and it preserves errors unless these have been detected and removed in proof. Again, an author must be credited with knowing how his "character" would talk, and be allowed to make him talk in that way. If the result is bad English he cannot himself be accused, neither can his character be quoted as an authority.



"If I *were* rich" and "If I *were* to give" are preferable, but it would be priggish to insist on them in talk. In any case, the subjunctive mood is on its last legs—as I will show presently. Actually "If I was to give" and "If I were to give" carry different shades of meaning: the first makes the act of giving seem important and perilous, the second is more speculative and does not hint at any probable or inevitable consequence.



THE SUBJUNCTIVE FOG

The use of *were* for *was* in "If I were you" is more a matter of philology than of grammar. As the Oxford English Dictionary shows, the various forms of the verb *to be* are mixed up survivals of Aryan, Sanskrit, and Old Teutonic stems and originated in different periods. They have never been organized. Thus in "If I were you" *were* is neither a true plural nor a true past tense. Obviously it cannot be plural and, as Fowler (*Modern English Usage*) points out, it refers to no particular time, but only to what he calls Utopian time, that is to time apart from clock or calendar.



The subjunctive mood is concerned, not with fact, but only with supposed or conceivable fact, with uncertainty, or with some suspending condition or stipulation that implies present doubt. Thus "*If he were with us*", being imaginative, not factual, takes the subjunctive "*were*", not the indicative "*was*". In many sentences, to change the subjunctive form to the indicative is to shift the meaning from doubt to actuality and so to falsify the meaning. Take these two clauses

Though all care be taken

Though all care is taken

The first means "Even supposing that all care will be taken . . ." The second means "In spite

of the fact that all care is taken ” Similarly the two sentences

Whether I be master or you, one thing is plain

You shall soon see whether I am master or you

carry different suggestions The first admits a doubt in the subjunctive mood, the second implies assurance of mastery in the indicative mood



Difficulty in the choice of one mood or the other often arises from supposing that words like *if*, *whether*, and *though* must necessarily be followed by the subjunctive Someone submitted to me this sentence

An inquiry was set on foot to find out if this was true

My correspondent said that many people would have written “if this *were* true” Yes, but they would have been wrong The doubt here is an item in a narration of past facts, the object of the inquiry being simply to find out whether the report was true or not, therefore “was true or not” is just as indicative as “set on foot”; it is in no way conditional An example of the wrong use

THE SUBJUNCTIVE FOG

of the subjunctive after *though*, given in *The King's English*, is rendered the more ludicrous because the writer was reporting a conversation with a foreigner who knew hardly anything of our language

and who, taking my hand, bade me "Good morning"—nightfall though it were

Here, of course, the subjunctive "were" should be the indicative "was", the word "though" not having introduced any doubt or condition



The delusion that any *if* is enough to throw a following verb into the subjunctive mood accounts for such a sentence as

If rent were cheap, food was dearer than to-day

Here *was* is required in both clauses, "if" does not make the second statement in any way conditional on the first—"if" being merely the equivalent of "although" or "while" The same mistake occurs in the sentence

It is stated that during the early part of the War of Independence (1821), the Greeks massacred Mussulmans, if this were so, it was only in self defence

"Were" should be "was "



Mixing the indicative and subjunctive moods in the same sentence is a common error ' Thus .

If that appeal be made and results in the return of the Government to power, then

This should read (all indicative) "If that appeal is made and results " It is important to remember that "*as if*" and "*as though*" always take the subjunctive, because "*as*" introduces the speculative element and is usually preceded by the doubt-laden words "*it looks*" or "*it seems*" as in "*It looks as if trouble were brewing*"



The use of *were* for *was* in conditional statements, or in those conveying a wish or a doubt, came into the language gradually and with a good deal of overlapping and inconsistency Thus the Bible (A V) of 1611 has "I would thou *wert* cold or hot," whereas Bunyan (*Pilgrim's Progress*, 1684) has "As if one *was* awake " In this matter the A V. is itself very inconsistent To-day the choice of mood goes strongly in favour of the indicative, though the subjunctive is still demanded with more or less pedantry The best grammarians agree that the subjunctive usage is slowly passing out of English Seventy years ago Dean Alford wrote: "We all say 'Whether it is or

not' I cannot say"—not 'whether it be ' And so of other conditional sentences Fowler doubts whether it would ever have been possible to tabulate the accepted uses of the now "dying" subjunctive Dr Jespersen (*Essentials of English Grammar*) questions whether even the idiom "If I were you," "If he were here," will be "strong enough to prevail against the natural evolution of language"



Thus the subjunctive fog is being slowly but surely dispersed So long as it creeps between rule and custom the best guides are clear thinking and a sense of the risks of using the mood more than can be helped This may seem to thicken, rather than lighten, the fog, but the truth is that you cannot legislate for a mode of expression that is consistently taking a new direction That great philologist and grammarian, Dr Robert Gordon Latham, gave this tip for determining whether the amount of doubt implied in a conditional sentence is sufficient to require the subjunctive Insert after "if" or "whether" one of these two phrases (1) *as in the case*, (2) *as may or may not be the case* If the first interpolation is implied, use the indicative mood, thus "If (*as in the case*) he *is* gone, I must follow him",

but if the second gives the true meaning, use the subjunctive mood, thus "*If (as may or may not be the case) he be gone, I must follow him*" Unfortunately this distinction was drawn ninety years ago, and since then the bias toward the indicative has become so strong that to say "*If he be gone, I must follow him*" now seems to be stiff and pedantic In some contexts Latham's distinction holds good but, as the Oxford English Dictionary points out, "in modern use the indicative is preferred to the subjunctive in cases which lie near the border-line" And the border-line is steadily shifting towards the indicative Meanwhile you may say "If it rains to-morrow" or "If it should rain to-morrow" and the difference is not one between good and bad grammar but between two shades of meaning

Grammar, like the grammarian, is mortal

COMMON ERRORS AND SNAGS

Alright

NEVER—*never*—write “alright” It is all wrong (not alwrong), and it stamps a person who uses it as uneducated “Alright” joins two words only to weaken both It cannot be defended on the analogy of “almost,” “already,” “albeit,” etc In these words the fusion of two ideas is complete, whereas “all” and “right” do not lend themselves to this welding process, the two ideas co-operate better than they unite Even “already” does not express “all ready,” nor does “almost” mean the same as “all most”

“All right” (not alright) is alone correct The phrase is more modern than one might suppose It came into use when, little more than a hundred years ago, the guards of mail-coaches gave “All’s Right” as the word to go

“Less” and “Fewer”

Less appertains to degree, quantity, or extent, *fewer* to number Thus, *less* outlay, *fewer* expenses; *less* help, *fewer* helpers, *less* milk, *fewer* eggs

But although “few” applies to number do not

join it to the word itself "a fewer number" is incorrect, say "a smaller number"

"Less" takes a singular noun, "fewer" a plural noun thus, "less opportunity," "fewer opportunities"

Each

Each may be followed either by a singular or a plural verb according to the true sense in which it is used "Brown, Jones, and Robinson have decided to go each their own way" is *wrong* The intention is clearly to state the separate and individual resolves of Brown, Jones, and Robinson, and the singular verb is in accord with this intention But if the writer has no such intention and merely refers to Brown, Jones, and Robinson as being of one mind, then the plural verb may be used Thus "Brown, Jones, and Robinson each have (or "have each") their plans"

A very common error is to say "between each course," "between each lamp-post," etc The fault is one of logic as well as of grammar It is correct to write "between courses" or "between every two lamp-posts."

On the other hand "between" can be used of more than two things when it means "among," as in "Between the great Powers of Europe," or "The choice lies between three applicants."

Infer and Imply

These two words are disastrously confused by a good many people—disastrously because the use of one for the other stamps the speaker (or writer) as uneducated

Both words refer to things half said. A speaker (or writer) *implies* (i e wraps up, implicates) what he does not fully express. A listener (or reader) *infers* (i e deduces) the full meaning from so much as *is* expressed. Mr A P Herbert's illustration, in *What a Word!* is this "If you see a man staggering along the road you may *infer* that he is drunk, without saying a word, but if you say, 'Had one too many?' you do not *infer* but *imply* that he is drunk."

Negative Muddles

The rule that two negatives, applied to the same thing, make a positive is logical. If you "do not *not*," it follows that you *do*. To-day this crude usage is found only among the uneducated. The mistake is less one of grammar than of failure to think clearly, as in the vulgarism, "*I don't know nothing about it*." Here the meaning is clear enough, but the illogicality is no longer pardoned.

Chaucer, Shakespeare, and later writers used the double negative to give emphasis, but this usage is now confined to illiterate people, who

are even capable of the multiple negative, as in the sentence quoted by Mr W J Weston in *Improve Your English* "They'll not arf ask yer no questions abaht it, but nothin' can't happen if yer act as if yer never knowed nothin—see?" Here again the meaning is clear but the English is mud

Snags arise when one of the negatives is implied while the other is direct, as in the sentences "He *forbade* his son *not* to smoke cigarettes" or "I *demed* that he had *no* right" Yet I have modelled these examples on two utterances in Shakespeare's plays The words "forbade" and "denied" are negative in effect and cannot be followed by *not* or *no* without a reversal of the intended meaning

But this is not all, for by accepted idiom a double negative may be correctly used in order to weaken or mitigate the meaning which a full positive would convey. Thus "It is *not improbable*" is used intentionally to dilute "It is probable," and "It is *not unknown*" to be less emphatic than "It is known" "She is *not unhappy*" gives a more cautious assurance than "She is happy."

Evince

This is a dusty antique-shop word better avoided Its primary meaning is to conquer, and

it comes from the same Latin verb as "evict" Milton wrote "Error by his own arms is best evinced" This sense has long been obsolete and the present one is to show, prove, make manifest In this sense it is still a favourite with callow journalists who like to write "he evinced a desire" instead of "showed," "expressed," etc.

Phenomenal

This word is now widely misused to mean remarkable, prodigious, etc One even meets with "almost phenomenal"

A phenomenon is simply an appearance or a thing perceived, and as such the word is correctly used in the sentence (T H Huxley) "Everyone is familiar with the common phenomenon of a piece of metal being eaten away by rust" But the sentence, "The death-rate had dropped to the phenomenally low figure of forty-three," is bad English any figure would have been "phenomenal"

"Phenomenal" has become a labour-saving word

As to . . .

Used in the sense of "concerning," "about," this is one of the most frequent weeds of speech. It either takes the place of a natural preposition

or it is merely intrusive. Thus in the sentence, "The question *as to* costs was held over," it elbows out *of*. In the clause, "To consider *as to* the provision of landing-stages on the Embankment" it is so superfluous that Mr A. P. Herbert, quoting it in *What a Word!*, is driven to suggest that *as to* makes the Councillors feel that they are "not committed to actual consideration." The phrase is thought to be ceremonially proper, like a high stiff collar. Even the Board of Education is capable of the wording "To inquire *as to* the selection and provision of books for public Elementary schools." Here *as to* is fog-English for "into" or "about."

The proper use of *as to* is to introduce, with convenient abruptness, a matter which has already been mentioned or hinted at although it is not in the main line of discussion. It usually precedes a dismissal of the subject as irrelevant.

The wanderings of "only"

The word "only" can be so badly misplaced in a sentence as (1) to cause ambiguity, (2) to weaken the meaning, (3) to make nonsense. The effect of "only" being to *limit* the word or phrase to which it refers, it is but logical that it should be placed next to that word or phrase. But idiom allows it to be separated from either, and so we say. "*I only had an apple for lunch to-day,*"

although what the speaker means is that he had *only an apple* for lunch. Again, "*He only died last week*" can be taken to mean that he might have done something else more impressive. Yet here there is no ambiguity, because this reading of the sentence is too absurd to occur to anybody.

But, suppose you say "*The poor fellow only came home to die,*" you weaken and distort your meaning, which is "*The poor fellow came home—only to die*." You do not mean that he came home only because he did not wish to die elsewhere, but that he came home and only death awaited him.

In that excellent manual, *An A B C of English Usage*, the authors, Messrs Treble and Vallins, point out that the sentence, "*Only a miracle can save him,*" becomes nonsense if it is written "A miracle can only save him."

From these examples it follows that *only* can be either harmlessly or harmfully misplaced, according to the speaker's (or writer's) real meaning or his desired emphasis. For example, it may be enough to say (colloquially and idiomatically)

"*This disastrous result can only be explained by supposing* . . ."

but a stronger effect is produced by

"*This disastrous result can be explained only by supposing . . .*"

The right choice depends not on a rule, but on clear thinking

Function

"Function" as a verb, in the sense of to act or proceed with, is shoddy English. The sentence, "The council declined to function," i.e. to act, is an example. Used of machinery ("the engine refused to function") the verb is admissible.

In recent years "function," as a noun, has come to mean any kind of social occasion or activity, such as a reception or a garden party—a journalistic pomposity that cannot be defended.

"Mental"

The use of "mental" in the sense of mentally defective has become common in recent years. The abbreviation falsifies the fact. You might as well say of a deaf man that he is aural. The use of "mental" rests on a feeling of delicacy that misses its aim.

"As follows" or "as follow"?

"As follows," preceding the mention of several things, is *not* an error. The things themselves do not follow, but only the body or list of them. Write, therefore, "the rules and regulations are as follows."

Aggravate

The use of this verb in the sense of to irritate, vex, annoy, is bad in speech and worse in writing—though a novelist, of course, can properly put it into the mouth of an illiterate person, as was often done by Dickens. The word means to make heavier, and it is properly applied to the worsening of an offence, a bad state of things. A dispute can be aggravated, but not the disputants.

Nice

This misused and over-used little word has a curious history. Its transformations of meaning have puzzled philologists, and the Oxford English Dictionary virtually confesses its inability to explain them—as it well may, since it gives as its first definition of the word “foolish, stupid, senseless.” Although this meaning is stated to be “obsolete,” I think it lingers faintly in such expressions as “a nice state of things,” “a nice mess,” “a nice predicament.”

The O E D gives, and illustrates by quotation, no fewer than fourteen uses of “nice” that are now obsolete or rare. To Chaucer it meant foolish, and to Shakespeare both foolish and loose-mannered. It has meant lazy, luxurious, coy, reluctant, fastidious, particular, scrupulous, refined, minute, trivial, needing delicate handling,

finely discriminative, and so forth. Some of these meanings survive, and all are more or less closely allied. The present commonest meaning of "nice" does not seem to be earlier than the middle of the eighteenth century. In 1769 Elizabeth Carter, the celebrated "blue-stocking," wrote in a letter "I intend to take a nice walk," and to "look nice" is found in a writer of 1793. "Nice" is still the weak and uninforming equivalent of "pleasing," "agreeable"—as in "a nice book," whatever that may mean, or "a nice man," whatever sort of Johnnie that may mean.

"Nice," in the sense it bears in "a nice distinction," that is, a subtle or closely logical distinction, and in "the niceties of the law," can be traced a long way back.

After "Centenary"—What

Was the use of the term *octingentenary* for the 800th anniversary of the founding of the cathedral of St. Magnus, celebrated in 1937 correct? The committee in charge of the celebration called it the "octocentenary." So should I have done. The Latin root is *octogenti*, meaning simply 800, and its application to 800 years is modern and arbitrary, following the models of *centenary*, which does not include the notion of years—whereas *centennial* (made up of *centum*, a hundred,

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and *annus*, a year) does measure the time elapsed Fowler (*Modern English Usage*) recommends, however, the following progressive series

<i>Centenary</i>	<i>Sescenary</i>
<i>Bicentenary</i>	<i>Septingenary</i>
<i>Tercentenary</i>	<i>Octingenary</i>
<i>Quadringenary</i>	<i>Nongenary</i>
<i>Quingenary</i>	<i>Millenary</i>

in each case giving the *e* before "nary" the double-*e* sound as in "need" These rarely-needed terms do not interest one every day or in every year, and the naming of an 800th anniversary seems a matter for almost as much freedom as the naming of a dog On the ground of expressiveness there is a great deal to be said for the American use of *centennial* for a hundredth anniversary and for harmonizing the other forms in accordance thus, octocentennial (but preferably eighth centennial) Unfortunately, Methuselah did not compile a dictionary or a birth-day book

Schedule—"skedule"

"A friend, an eminent divine and Greek scholar, takes the view that, as 'schedule' is derived from the Greek, the *ch* should be pronounced like *k*" To this inquirer I replied that the fully accepted English pronunciation is

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shedule in similar examples we sometimes retain the Greek *k* and sometimes use our soft *c*. We say "Katholic" but not "Kenotaph," we do not go *kykling* (from *kuklos*) but *cycling*. My correspondent's classical friend does not, I feel sure, pronounce the *g* hard in *logic*, though it would be *logical* to do so.

In American the word is pronounced *skedule*, but that is a fact, not an argument.

"Which" or "That"?

"Which" is very often used where "that" would be the better relative, with the result that the sentence either becomes falsely precise or actually misleading. Wherever "that" and "which" can be said to be interchangeable, "that" is to be preferred. A story of John Morley (later Lord Morley) was told by Miss Hulda Friedrichs some years ago to the *Westminster Gazette*. "In 1920 Messrs Macmillan published a new edition of Lord Morley's works. He was determined to make it a carefully revised edition, and made one or two attempts to revise it himself. He then asked me whether I would care to help him, and explained what my part of the work would be. He was particularly keen on having the word *which*, wherever there was the possibility, exchanged for *that*."

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The effect of this change is to ease the movement of a sentence

But what is the guiding principle? As stated by Fowler (*Modern English Usage*) it is this *that* should be used where the things (or people) referred to are defined or limited, and *which* where they are not so defined or limited. Thus "Each made a list of books that had interested him" is correct, because the books so listed are limited to those which had influenced the writer. Whereas in the sentence, "I always buy his books, which have interested me greatly," *which* does not in any way limit the fact of buying, it introduces a new fact—that of being interested. Again, "The river, *which* here is tidal, is dangerous" is correct because "*which*" has no defining or limiting force. "The river *that* flows through London is the Thames" is correct because the river is defined by the fact that it is London's river, and not some other river flowing somewhere else.

WHO FIRST SAID IT?

HE was a bold man that first ate an oyster! I was asked whether Jonathan Swift was the first sayer. Perhaps, and perhaps not. Swift introduced the saying into his *Polite Conversations* (1738), a satirical guide to social small-talk, but it seems

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probable that he was quoting a popular wheeze. It is attributed, indeed, to James I, who, also, may well have taken it from common speech.

The origin of such a saying is seldom traceable with certainty. In the same work Swift wrote "They say oysters are a cruel meat, because we eat them alive. Then they are an uncharitable meat, for we leave nothing to the poor, and they are an ungodly meat, because we never say grace." But he adapted this from *Tarleton's Jests* (1611) and Tarleton was a compiler who might have picked it up anywhere.

The saying that oysters are good to eat only in those months that have the letter R in their names can be found in Butte's *Dyets Dry Dinner* (1599), but it does not follow that it originated with this author.

EITHER-NEITHER TRAPS

IN the use of "either" and "neither" many people forget that they are referring to two persons or things *separately*, and not as *both* or together. They will write "They are not, nor *are* either of them, liable." Here, in the very act of dividing "they" into two separate *eithers* they keep the plural verb as if they were writing of both and not of each.

EITHER-NEITHER TRAPS

"Either" (or "neither") takes the singular verb. Giving it the plural verb is a very common error, yet it is one of logic rather than of syntax. How illogical the plural verb after "either" or "neither" can be is amusingly illustrated by Fowler, who quotes this "almost incredible" freak sentence, in which "neither" is a pronoun "*Lord Hothfield and Lord Reay were born the one in Paris and the other at The Hague, neither being British subjects at the time of his birth*" "As indeed," he remarks, "neither could be unless he were twins."

The question whether "either" and "neither" can properly be associated with more than *two* things is often asked. The logical answer seems to be No. Yet Ruskin, quoted by Dr Jespersen (*Essentials of English Grammar*) without censure, wrote "Nor does it appear in any way desirable that either of the three classes should extend itself." Ruskin's authority is not enough to justify his over-usage.

Yet in the Authorized Version of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans we find "neither nor" spread over no fewer than *ten* substantives "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able." But here rhetorical effect can be pleaded, moreover, "neither . . . nor" being

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established at the outset, it seems legitimate to allow "nor" to do progressive duty, allowing "neither" to retain control over the sequence

SPOONFULS OR SPOONSFUL?

OUGHT we to say "two spoonfuls" or "two spoonsful"? Doubts and disputes on this point are constantly arising, but the answer is simple. A *spoonful* is the quantity contained in a spoon, it is a measure and therefore an entity. As such it should be treated as a simple noun whose plural is spoonfuls. People who insist on *spoonsful* are inconsistent, for they would never say "two mouthsful" or "two handsful." Once we have united *ful* or *full* to the name of the containing vessel you have made a normal noun, and the plural *s* should go after *ful*, not before it. This does not apply, however, to prepositions used as affixes after nouns thus we say "whippers-in," "lookers-on," "passers-by."

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THERE are no perfect synonyms, but only approximations. It is true that in many contexts one of two or three "synonyms" will do as well as another, but the substitution always involves another shade of meaning. "A fat man" is not quite the same as "a corpulent man." "Fat" suggests one part of his frame, the belly, "corpulent" suggests his whole physique. Many synonyms which are available in one context cease to be synonyms in another, thus you can call a man a big fool, but you cannot call him a large fool.

When a careful writer seeks a synonym he knows that even the nearest he can find will convey a slightly different meaning or suggestion to his readers. It may, by good chance, convey his real meaning better than the word he had intended, but it will do so by giving it a different shade. It follows that such nice differences are not subjects of rule, but of fastidious choice.

Let us see, then, how the right choice among three or four apparently synonymous words can be made. In his *Development of the Art of Language in Latin and in English*, Mr. W. A. Russell asks: "Can synonyms always be dis-

tinguished?" By way of answer he instances the words

abhor
detest
loathe
abominate

and asks "Is there any real distinction of meaning between these four words? Notwithstanding the interesting facts philologists have to tell about their different derivations, we think there is no real difference in their use. They give expression to a strong feeling of dislike. This is not to deny that a real distinction between them in usage might yet develop." I suggest that real distinctions in usage between these words have already developed, and that no careful writer fails to perceive them. It is of little use to seek for the distinctions in a dictionary, however good. The way in which good contemporary writers use words is a far truer guide than dictionary definitions, or than quotations from writers of the past whose usages may have become old-fashioned or obsolete.



Mr Russell says that there is no real difference in the use of the four words quoted above, they all give expression to a strong feeling of dislike. Yes, but there are different kinds and moods of dislike, and each of these words somehow

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conveys something (none the less real for being subtle) which the other three do not convey. That something is felt rather than clearly perceived. Suppose that, for convenience, we adopt the word *hate* as a sort of common denominator, then how do these words vary the idea of hating? I suggest that they do so in the following ways.

ABHOR has lost in great degree its old physical meaning of to start back in horror, with hair on end, to stand aghast, to retreat from with shuddering. It has long had a calmer, but deeper significance, such as you find in the A V Bible—"Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat" (*Ps* cvii, 18), or in Burke's counsel, "Abhor intrigue." Moreover, *abhor* is seldom applied to *persons*, one does not so much abhor a man as his opinions or practices.

DETEST is to hate from more intimate knowledge of, or closer contact with, the person or thing hated. It is less dignified, but more direct than *abhor*.

LOATHE expresses hatred in terms of nausea or nervous distress. It derives its force primarily from physical sensation, and though this connection is not always conspicuous, it is never quite lost, as in "He loathed tyranny."

ABOMINATE is a more rhetorical word than the others and is in less frequent use. It is apt to suggest wrath or indignation as distinct from

dislike or disgust, thus "Such cruelty is to be abominated by all good men" On the other hand, just because the word has rhetorical energy it is often used colloquially to express dislike or distaste in very ordinary matters, thus "Not being musical, he abominated concerts", or a man, discussing food, may say, "I abominate tomatoes "



It is clear, then, that a synonym cannot be defined as a word which means exactly the same thing as another You might search all the beaches of all the seas for two pebbles identical in shape and colour—they do not and cannot exist The Oxford English Dictionary, after defining a synonym as strictly a word having the same sense as another in the same language, amends this to two or more words "having the same general sense, but possessing each of them meanings which are not shared by the other or others, or having different shades of meaning appropriate to different contexts," and it instances groups similar to the one I have discussed It will be seen, therefore, that the right of use of so-called synonyms belongs to the art, not to the rules, of writing

The synonyms or twin words or phrases I shall now discuss are chosen because they are the subjects of frequent inquiry.

Await—wait

Hesitation between two words which appear to have *precisely* the same meaning is very common for example, whether to write *await* or *wait* Sometimes one, sometimes the other, and sometimes either is preferable The reader will do well to turn from the grammatical rule, which is highly technical, to these six sentences, which are all "correct "

I *await* (or *wait*) your decision

I *wait* for you to decide (not await)

They found him *awaiting* them (not waiting)

They found him *waiting* for them (not awaiting)

I *await* (or *wait*) his ruling on the matter

I shall *wait* to bring him home (not await)

It will be seen at a glance that *await* is used transitively, governing an object ("He awaited us"), whereas *wait* is used intransitively (he waited *for* us) The last sentence in this list shows, further, that *wait* can be followed by an infinitive ("to bring"), *await* cannot

Further—farther

When two words differ hardly at all in meaning one of them tends to be used more generally than the other, and that other may gradually pass

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out of the language *Further* is much more generally used than *farther*. It can be used both as an adjective and a verb, *farther* cannot you can further a scheme or someone's interests but not farther them. *Farther*, the comparative of *far*, is more suggestive of space and distance, as in "The farther you go the more barren the land" and "thus far no farther", but *further* is rightly used of shorter distance, as in "the further end of the room". It is not possible to frame a satisfactory rule, and as for usage it differs among good writers.

Individuality—personality

In rough and ready writing these two words are often used synonymously, because the difference between them does not matter to the broad meaning. But in good writing it is unlikely that the one will often do for the other. What is the distinction? *Individuality* suggests separateness from other people, whereas *personality* contemplates only the particular self. The Oxford English Dictionary defines individuality as "indivisible or inseparable entity". Personality, it is true, focuses attention on the named person with little if any reference to other persons. Individual, however, is the more exclusive term. "My individual opinion" suggests an opinion held without care for other people's opinions, or

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in defiance of them "My personal opinion" does not strike this note of separateness so strongly. The one word uses the emphasis of contrast, the other only asserts.

Personality is external and visible, and we recognize its effect on others and its value as an introduction and an influence. Individuality is internal and mysterious. Something like a rule, then, emerges, but it must be remembered that the test of a rule lies in its proper application in difficult cases, and—there's the rub.

Necessities—necessaries

Either in the singular or plural *necessity* is by far the greater word in meaning and suggestion. It stands not merely for something needed, but for the ultimate law which governs all human needs and their satisfaction. *Necessitas* was the mother of the *Parcæ*—that is, of the three Fates, *Clotho*, *Lachesis*, and *Atropos*, to whose will and decrees Jove himself was said to be subject. In high connections, therefore, necessities are above necessaries, they are abstract or spiritual, whereas necessaries appertain to common and concrete needs. When we say "Of necessity . . .," "logical necessity," "making a virtue of necessity," etc., we are retaining something of the old large meaning. We speak fitly of the *necessities* of life and the *necessaries* for a picnic. Yet in

general practice the two words are used so interchangeably that it would now be difficult to frame a rule for their separation, and impossible to get it obeyed. The deciding factors are taste and discretion.

Loan—lend

These words are not synonyms in England because they are not used in the same contexts; moreover *loan*, formerly an English verb, is now only a noun. In the United States it remains a verb. To say "Will you loan me a pencil?" is obsolete English, though the meaning is clear enough.

Less—lesser

The frequent objection to *lesser* cannot be sustained. In Old English comparatives and superlatives were often doubled for emphasis and "lesser" has survived because of euphonious contrast with "greater," as in Genesis 1: "And God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night."

"Lesser" and "less" are both comparatives of *little*, but only "lesser," by established idiom, can be placed before a noun. Moreover, "lesser" is properly applied to size or importance, "less" to

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quantity or degree Thus we speak of the moon as "the lesser light," and "the Lesser Prophets," but we say "less than kind," "less happy" ' Tennyson's lines in "Locksley Hall" illustrate this point

*Woman is the lesser man and all thy passions,
match'd with mine,
Are as moonlight unto sunlight and as water
unto wine*

"To a greater or lesser extent" is preferable to "a greater or less extent" on the ground of contrast and rhythm

Excellence—excellency

These forms were long interchangeable, though euphony and period-custom influenced the choice One might suppose that *excellency*, meaning the state of being excellent, is older than *excellence* But in Wycliffe's Bible "excellence" is frequent, whereas in the Authorized Version, made 250 years later, only "excellency" appears, and it was used for "excellence" down to the end of the eighteenth century In 1716 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu could write of "fountains famous for the excellency of their water," and sixty years later Sir Joshua Reynolds spoke in one of his *Discourses* of "those higher excellencies of which the art is capable "

"Excellency," but not "excellence" is a title

that goes back to the fourteenth century, when it was applied to Edward the Second. The designation is now narrowed (Oxford English Dictionary) to "ambassadors, ministers plenipotentiary, governors and their wives, and other high officers." This appropriation of "Excellency" as a title almost precludes its old use for Excellence.

Comprehend—understand

To *comprehend* has a larger meaning than to *understand*; it is to understand all. To understand is to know as well as one can know, to comprehend is to know with complete knowledge, or at least with deep understanding. One may *understand* this and that, yet have little *comprehension* of the whole matter, its real nature. We understand God or try to do so through the Creation or through the Bible or by meditation; we cannot begin to comprehend Him.

In regard to—As regards—regarding

Generally speaking these are synonymous phrases. What needs to be said is that they are all used in slovenly excess to keep sentences on their legs. The effect on style is rather like a buzzing in the ears.

Often all three mean simply "about," and a clean and clear writer will avoid them instinc-

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tively Fowler (*Modern English Usage*) quotes this sentence "It is well said, in every sense, that a man's religion is the chief fact *with regard to him*" The italicized phrase is perfectly intelligible and is not incorrect, but it is turgid The words should be replaced by *about* or *concerning*

"With regard to," "I regard it unsuitable," "I regard it iniquitous," are not English Here *as* should follow "it"

"Regard" must not be followed by *to be*, as in the badly conceived sentence "Some people regard it to be their duty" Here "consider," "think," "imagine," "suppose," or "believe" are better than "regard"

Use—utilize

To utilize is not in the full sense to use, it is, rather, to turn to a particular use something which would not normally be used for the purpose, though in some connections the two words are practically interchangeable

Illusion—delusion

The distinction is important though it sometimes tends to vanish An *illusion* is, properly, a false impression based on some reality, it is a misinterpretation of an appearance, as when Sir Walter Scott thought he saw Byron's ghost in

his hall at Abbotsford, and then found that the figure of Byron had been produced on his eye and brain from the coats, hats, and umbrellas on the hall-stand. Similarly a conjurer produces illusions. An optical illusion is also an optical *delusion*, but here "illusion" is preferable because it signifies a delusion received, whereas an optical delusion might be a delusion not directly communicated—it might be a blunder in theory or false conception on the part of an optician, peculiar to optical science. Generally speaking, an illusion is associated with sight, but a delusion may be purely mental or moral.

Situated—situate

This is not a question of *spelling*. "Situate" and "situated" are two forms of the same word, the first being nearer to the Latin *situat-us* than is *situat-ed*, where the termination is Teutonic. "Situate" is also formed on the Latin *situs*, a site, and has long been used in relation to sites and buildings. Gibbon wrote "This large and populous city was situate about two days journey from the Tigris"; to-day an author of equal eminence would write "situated". So recent a writer as Miss Braddon wrote in one of her novels, "The chateau was situate on low ground." But "situate" is now used mainly by solicitors, estate agents, and—poets.

SYNONYMS AND TWIN PHRASES

• “*While*” and “*whilst*”

These words are used indifferently in the sense of “at the same time that,” and when introducing such phrases as “granting that,” “not disputing the statement,” etc , thus “While (whilst) I am convinced that ”

“While” is preferable, though “whilst” may come a little more impressively from bishops and curates and persons of alleged importance On the other hand, “while” lends itself to more sloppy use than “whilst” It often means no more than “and,” as in the typical descriptive-reporting statement, quoted by the Oxford English Dictionary “The walls are decorated with white enamelled panelling, while the frieze and ceiling are in modern plaster” Here “while” has no meaning beyond “and ”

Verbal—oral

Verbal means “of words,” *oral* “of mouth,” and context determines the choice “Verbal” applies to written words, “oral” to spoken words As long ago as 1667 Pepys wrote “He did it by verbal order from Sir W Coventry,” and Swift (1727) wrote “Mr Curll immediately proceeded to make a verbal will,” though just what he meant by this is not clear there is no such thing as an “oral” will, probably he meant that Curll orally

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dictated the words of his will The two words are sometimes interchangeable

Presume—assume

You presume what you think is true, you assume what you think ought to be true In either case you may be wrong in the result, but you will have made the right distinction

Assurance and insurance

What is the difference between Life Assurance and Life Insurance? The answer is that there is no difference It is sometimes objected that it is impossible to assure life, that is to say, guarantee its continuance But the thing assured is not life, it is its money-value to survivors so far as this can be secured in advance by the payment of larger or smaller premiums The assured person is assured that the money value which he sets on his life will be forthcoming "Life Assurance" is therefore a convenient and correct term for this arrangement

Of the two terms "Assurance" is the older. It goes back to about Shakespeare's time "Insurance" became common a generation later, Pepys uses it in his Diary. By the middle of the eighteenth century the terms had become virtually synonymous and therefore interchangeable,

SYNONYMS AND TWIN PHRASES

though some people thought they should do separate work In 1826 Charles Babbage, famous for his calculating machine, pleaded that as a matter of convenience Assurance should be limited to the covering of risks to life, Insurance to risks of property But this proposed distinction, good as it was, fell flat

Babbage himself did not insist too strenuously on the separation of the terms In the preface to one of his books he wrote "The terms *insurance* and *assurance* have been used indiscriminately for contracts relative to life, fire, and shipping As custom has rather more frequently employed the latter term for those relative to life, I have, in this volume, entirely restricted the word *assurance* to that sense" The advantage of *insurance* is that it has only one, the intended, meaning, while the word *assurance* has several meanings and the use of the verb *assure* in this connection is difficult if not impossible one cannot conveniently say "You ought to assure your life"

Older—elder

How do these comparatives differ? Historically, they are the same word, "elder" and "older" being alike comparatives of "old" But (also historically) the two words have diverged "Elder" and "eldest" are now used almost exclusively of members of one family, "eldest" or

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"elder" son, etc But "older" can be used here when mere age, not comparative age, is in the mind of the speaker Thus, "I have an older brother" would mean simply a brother older in years than the one you mention "My older aunt" would mean "my more aged aunt," but here "elder" could be properly used if the two aunts were being referred to as sisters

"Elder" retains a certain quasi-poetic quality which can still be invoked at a writer's discretion—and risk One can write of "those elder times " In card-play the "eldest hand" is the first player after the cards are dealt, though he or she may be the youngest of the players

Elder is a noun as well as an adjective, *older* never The scriptural use of "elder" or "elders" is familiar as a more or less official title, thus "And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers and elders, and scribes . . . were gathered together at Jerusalem " In certain modern religious bodies church officers are designated "elders " Finally, one may write of "the olden time" or (archaically) of "the wise men of eld."

CONCRETE AND ABSTRACT TERMS

WHICH TO USE AND WHY

YOUNG writers are often told that they should use a concrete expression in preference to an abstract one whenever this is possible. This advice is sound. What is the difference between these two modes of expression?

A concrete phrase uses things which have bodily existence and are known by the senses, an abstract one is concerned with ideas, states, or actions which have no bodily existence but are stuff of the mind. The difference is largely that between the particular and the general. Thus the one conveys thoughts through things, the other appeals directly to thought. "To interfere with him" is abstract, "to put a spoke in his wheel" is concrete. The abstract expression "to cause alarm (or disturbance)" has its concrete equivalent in "to flutter the doves", "to obscure the issue" becomes concrete in "to throw dust in the eyes". Profuse hospitality may be represented, in suitable contexts, by a reference to the fatted calf. If you say of a man that he usually adopts an opportunist policy you describe his habit in abstract terms, but you may prefer to convey your meaning more swiftly and clearly by saying that

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he is prone to run with the hare and hup with the hounds A vast number of our proverbs and familiar phrases have come into being as concrete expressions of abstract ideas



The heaviness of Dr Johnson's style is due to its overloaded abstractions, whereas Macaulay was a master of the concrete style, and that is the main secret of his fascination Take the passage in which he is telling us that Horace Walpole was a greater connoisseur than politician

"Serious business was a trifle to him, and trifles were his serious business From these he turned to politics as to an amusement After the labours of the print-shop and the auction-room, he unbent his mind in the House of Commons And, having indulged in the recreation of making laws, and voting millions, he returned to ."

Here Macaulay might have continued "he returned to the dilletante pursuits of an antiquary and collector " Instead he wrote

" . he returned to more important pursuits, to researches after Queen Mary's comb, Wolsey's red hat, the pipe which Van Tromp smoked in his last sea-fight, and the spur which King William struck into the flank of Sorrel."

CONCRETE AND ABSTRACT TERMS

Compare what he might have written with what he did write, and the greater vividness of the concrete style hits the eye



Frequently it is not possible or desirable to turn the abstract into the concrete—the purpose and art of the writer may forbid—but, broadly speaking, it is better to present thoughts in terms of things than things in terms of thought. You then expound something that the reader does not know, or may be slow to understand, in terms of what he does know and understands in a flash. A great writer mingles the two modes to produce an effect that can be got from neither alone. Thus a poetical or reflective passage, written in an elevated style, can be brought home with electric effect by a sudden change from the general to the particular, from a state of things to a single object. There can be no better example than these words of Hamlet

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the poor man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he might himself his quietus make
With a bare bodkin

Here, with the one exception of "whips," all is abstract until the means of delivery is named

And the homely English of "bodkin," following the Latin of "quietus," consummates a verbal art that conceals itself

PUBLIC-NOTICE ENGLISH

OVER-CRITICAL inspection of public notices should not be encouraged. It tends to become a mere itch, a razor-strop of wit. If such notices should be plain to the plain man in a hurry that is enough. Of course, some notices call for correction, as, for example, this specimen which I am told appears in one or two S R stations

Passengers are prohibited from crossing the line only by the footbridge.

This is to ask passengers to cross the line by the footbridge and by other means (say, the subway) simultaneously, and the error leaps to the eye. But to say that the notice *Passengers must cross the line by the Bridge* is an order to cross the line whether they want to cross it or not is silly. Nor is it reasonable to interpret *No Drinking allowed Outside these Premises* as a claim to a monopoly of human thirst. The prize for misdirected acumen should perhaps go to the critic who objected to the notice in his local buses, *Passengers entering or leaving the bus while in*

SAYING IT TWICE

motion do so at their own risk He wrote "Now I ask you, how can a passenger possibly enter or leave a bus unless he, or she, is in motion?" To him the best answer seems to be Sam Weller's to the pert message boy "You're a sharp lad, you are, only I wouldn't show that *wery* fine edge too much, if I was you, in case anybody took it off "

SAYING IT TWICE

(TAUTOLOGY AND PLEONASM)

SAYING the same thing *doubly* in different words and without reason is called tautology This word comes from the Greek *tauto*, the same, and *logia*, speech Young writers are apt to be tautological because they take a callow pride in words as words apart from thoughts as thoughts Not a few experienced writers become tautological through mere slipshod writing "The inevitable crash is bound to come" is tautological because if it is inevitable it *must* come and if it must come it is inevitable "The more preferable course" is the kind of tautology that is often called a pleonasm Here the same thing is not said twice in different words but it is said with a word too many. nothing can be "more" preferable than preferable In the same way to write of putting

two people or classes on "the same equality" is a pleonasm, the adjective "same" being implied in the noun. On the other hand an obvious pleonasm is sometimes introduced for emphasis or semi-poetic effect, as in the noble words of the Litany "O God, we have *heard with our ears*, and our fathers have declared unto us." Tautology, pleonasm, redundancy are much the same thing, and they arise from what Mr. Kennedy Williamson in his book, *Can You Write English?*, has aptly likened to double exposure in photography "two things, each of which is perfect by itself, are ruined by being brought into conjunction."



Some pleonasms have become so common and idiomatic that they have to be tolerated, though the best writers will avoid them. Of such are "in any shape or form," "of any sort or kind," "unless and until." The case of "if and when" is somewhat different because the same idea is not repeated. The objection to this phrase is that it is so often used unnecessarily. In nine cases out of ten "if" alone or "when" alone can do all the work required. Fowler (*Modern English Usage*) concedes that *if and when* is justified where one wants to convey that the result will follow without delay, but "any strong emphasis on the absence of delay is much

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better given by other means—by the insertion of *at once* or some equivalent in the result clause ” Even then, he points out, a writer will invent his own pleonasm by inserting an adverb to do the work over again, as in this example “The electors knew perfectly well that if and when the Parliament Bill was placed on the Statute-book it would *immediately* be used to pass Irish Home Rule ” Here “immediately” would actually give clearer emphasis if it followed only *if* or only *when*

These are some common examples of tautology or pleonasm

Subsequently followed
Save and except
While at the same time.
Limited only to
He first of all began
Sufficiently near enough
The former busy place it once was

In each of these examples a redundancy leaps to the eye

I have said that tautology may sometimes become an actual grace in poetry or exalted prose But this can hardly be pleaded in defence of the much-quoted couplet with which Dr Johnson opens his poem, “The Vanity of Human Wishes”

*Let Observation with extensive view
Survey mankind from China to Peru,*

which Oliver Goldsmith mischievously re-wrote "Let observation with observant view observe mankind " and Tennyson, more cruelly, "Let observation with extended observation observe extensively "

It should be noted, however, that a seemingly redundant word may not be redundant to the thought expressed, it may develop it. A reader questioned this line in a poem by Dr Bridges " 'That I sit so much by myself alone ' " Surely either, 'by myself' or 'alone' should be omitted here, or is this redundancy justified by Poetic Licence?"

"By myself alone" needs no poetic or other licence, it simply emphasizes the aloneness of the sitter. A man may sit by himself without being alone in any but an accidental way but Dr Bridges was apparently referring to a self-formed habit of sitting alone. The feigned separation of the *ego* from the *self* is a common (and necessary) literary device, as in Richard III's soliloquy, "I rather hate myself for hateful deeds committed by myself."

"DIDN'T USE TO"

THIS phrase is vulgar and wrong. But if "use" is here pronounced as *uze* (not as *uce*) the expression "didn't use" becomes right. Thus saving

“DIDN'T USE TO”

pronunciation is seldom heard to-day. In literary English, though now only in poetry, the word can be employed in this sense. So modern a poet as Browning wrote, “Die at good old age as grand men use [*uze*],” i. e. as grand men are in the habit of doing. A perfect example of this meaning of *use* [*uze*] occurs in Milton’s *Lycidas*

*Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade
Or with the tangles of Næra’s hair?*

Here, “as others use” means as others habitually do.

SOME COMMON PERPLEXITIES

OF all the great languages, ancient or modern, English is the most flexible and the least exact. It is rife with tongue and pen traps. To classify these, or to generalize about them, is impossible, for they crop up every day in every situation. Here are some of the perplexities that can be treated briefly.

"I should have liked to have made . . ."

This sentence from an account of a lecture was sent to me by a perplexed reader. "No one felt equal to asking a question, but had observations been called for, I should *have liked to have made one*." My correspondent asked, "Should it not be 'I should *like to have made one*' or 'I should have liked to make one'?"

The difficulty is that

- (1) I should have liked to have made
- (2) I should like to have made
- (3) I should have liked to make .

are all used by good writers. (1) The first clause, "I should have liked," establishes a *past* moment or *now*, in which there was a *present* desire to make an observation. Therefore it is

illogical to make the present refer to a then past fulfilment (or non-fulfilment) of the desire. This clash of times is seen in such a sentence as "Last year I was intending to have wintered abroad." Here a past *present* is first established, and therefore the present tense should have been used, thus "Last year I was intending (or had intended) to winter abroad," because, obviously, the intention came first. Of the three forms submitted by the inquirer (3) is the most logical, and time-keeping in respect both of the lecture and the comment, (2) is perhaps the most natural, (1) can be defended only on the insufficient ground that the second past tense is used in sympathy with the first.

"I should have liked to make" is my choice

And/or

This expression puzzles many people. "And" implies an addition, "or" offers an alternative. But as the one does not always exclude the other, *and/or* is used to indicate their fusion. Its use in this country is confined to legal and commercial documents, in which (to quote the new "Webster") "*and* is interpreted as if it were *or*, and vice versa, whenever this construction is plainly required to give effect to the intention of the person using it, thus in a bequest to 'a person *and* her bodily issue,' or in a law providing that

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certain cities may tax property 'taxable for State *and* county purposes' *and* may be read as *or* "

And/or is therefore the convenient symbol of this double applicability, and is especially useful when one of the two factors originally contemplated has disappeared or is in doubt

"I am going to go"

The propriety of this expression is often questioned "Going to go" is correct but ugly "Going to" and "to go" are different in meaning, "going" does not imply movement, but a disposition or intention—as in "he is going to be married next month " The origin of the phrase was the need for it Dickens supplies a neat example "He was full of promise, but of no performance He was always, in a manner, going to go, and never going "

"I was impressed (with or by?) . "

"I was confronted (with or by?) "

Niceties of speech are endless, and many are overlooked by inquirers who assume that of two nearly identical ways of expressing oneself one must be correct and the other incorrect Yet both may be correct, though in different contexts. Thus, "impressed" and "confronted" may be followed by either *by* or *with* but the choice

will affect the meaning Take these two sentences

(1) Mr A tried to impress me with his importance

(2) Mr A tried to impress me by his importance

In the first sentence the speaker does not admit the importance of Mr A., but merely refers to Mr A's own sense of it In the second sentence the speaker does not deny Mr A's importance, but implies that, in spite of it, Mr A failed to impress him

Actual contradiction, or something near it, can be produced by a wrong choice of the preposition Thus in his speech against Warren Hastings, at his trial, Burke suggested that Hastings had tried

“to impress all the neighbouring princes with an ill opinion of the faith, honour, and decency of the British nations ”

Here the use of *with* gives to “impress” the meaning of “infect” or “excite in” But if Hastings had substituted *by* the probable effect would have been to transfer the “ill opinion” to himself without suggesting that the princes were likely to adopt it In Burke's view Hastings wanted to implant the ill opinion, not merely to express it as his own. If he had said *by*, his meaning would have been lost or obscured.

SOME COMMON PERPLEXITIES

A like distinction comes into play between "confront by" and "confront with" The first implies direct opposition, defiance Goliath was confronted *by* David The second implies face to face comparison "he asked to be confronted *with* his accusers "

The moral is that true alternatives are scarce, deceptive ones common

A friend of Jones's

Many people are perplexed by the double possessive in this and like phrases the possessive implied in *of* and repeated in *Jones's* But "a friend of Jones" and "a friend of Jones's" have different shades of meaning The first contemplates only Mr Jones himself and the friend himself But the second contemplates the friend as only *one* of Jones's friends and in many contexts of speech it is the more natural and suitable expression

It is true that the genitive case is already completed in *of*, but our trick of doubling it in talk or writing is too idiomatic and familiar to be given up

On the other hand it is also too familiar to be applied to great or prominent persons "I met a friend of Tom's" is correct and fitting, but "I met a friend of Bernard Shaw's," "In Rome I met a friend of Mussolini's," "I met a

friend of the Archbishop's" are out of keeping. Sometimes the double possessive is not only allowable and correct but necessary to the meaning, as in "that dog of Jack's " You cannot say "that dog of Jack," and to say "Jack's dog" may convey a respect for the dog that you do not feel

"*Concur in*" or "*Concur with*"

You concur *in* another person's opinion, you concur *with* that person in his expression of it But it is better to *agree* with both

"*Very pleased*"

Should one write "I was very pleased" or "I was much pleased"? At once we are confronted by the *thought* intended, and it may be one of two thoughts If "pleased" is considered as a past participle the proper intensive is *much*, but if it is used as an adjective then *very* is correct—as in "very good " *An A B C of English Usage*, based on Fowler, gives as examples, "The seating accommodation was *very* limited " Here "limited" is an adjective, but where it remains a verb, as in "We were limited in our choice of seats," good usage demands "much" ("We were much limited . .") and forbids "very."

SOME COMMON PERPLEXITIES

Billiard or Billiards?

I have been frequently asked whether one should say Billiards Room or Billiard Room, billiards table or billiard table

It is, of course, not *incorrect* (how could it be?) to say Billiards Table But it is neither usual nor necessary to use the plural The game of Billiards is so named, not after the cue and balls and table and chalk and marker, but after the cue alone, i e the French *billard* or *bille* (stick) Not that this matters In generally accepted English the plural "billiards" is reserved for the game as a whole But in combination with "room," "table," "ball," etc, the singular "billiard" is used, just as the room in which Cards are played is called the card room, and the tables card tables

Similarly "Draughts" makes draught-board "Skittles" skittle alley, and "Darts" dart-board, Three hundred years ago Ben Jonson described a lady's cheek as "smooth as the billiard ball "

"A," or "an" before "hotel?"

To aitch or not to aitch?—that is a question that still crops up, and most often in connection with *hotel* Here both *a* and *an* are correct, the choice follows custom, not rule, and the tendency has long been to give the *h* its full aspirate value and

therefore to say and write "a hotel" Similarly "an 'ospital" is now almost universally "a hos-pital" The aspirated pronunciations are to be preferred

Fowler (*Modern English Usage*) goes so far as to say that the silent *h* in "humour" is "certainly doomed and not worth fighting for" I disagree, yet all I can oppose to his opinion is my own habit of dropping the *h* in "humour" and keeping it in "humorous" and "humorist." I say of a man that he has a sense of *yumour*, and is therefore a *humorous* fellow or a *humorist* The title of Ben Jonson's best-known play is for me, *Every Man in his Yumour*

The preference for "an historian" over "a historian" is due to the falling of the stress on the second syllable instead of on the first, as in "history", this makes aspiration more difficult

Fowler includes "honorarium" among words in which the silent *h* is becoming no longer silent *Honorarium* displeases me, though I am always open to accept one

"Ageing" or "aging"

The present participle of the verb "age" (grow old) is spelt with and without the *e* according to taste "Aging" conforms to the general rule that the mute *e* is dropped before a vowel as in "changing" But in practice "ageing" is more

SOME COMMON PERPLEXITIES

agreeable, safer, and much more frequent The Oxford English Dictionary allows both spellings but clearly prefers "ageing" I do

"Try and"—"try to"

We must be allowed our pet aversions "Try and" is one of mine, though you find it in Matthew Arnold's essays It is defended as an example, together with "nice and cosy," of the Greek trick of speech known as *hendiadys*, which means "one by means of two," that is to say, the division of what is really one notion into two apparent ones which are then linked by "and" to restore the single idea Thus "nice and cosy" means "nicely cosy" But I cannot see that this explanation fits "try and do" or "I will try and come," "I will try and ascertain" Try is a verb that does not disclose its wherefore until you have added another verb which may be one of a thousand possible ones If "try and go," why not "intend and go," "endeavour and go," "decide and go"? And you cannot put "try and go" into the past tense, "try to go" you can

None "is" or "are"

None may be followed by either the singular or the plural verb without change of meaning Read as "not one" it demands a verb in the

singular, but "none" has long had a "multitude" significance which permits a verb in 'either Number. Until a comparatively recent date it was almost always given a verb in the plural, but for some reason it is now more and more equipped in newspaper English with a verb in the singular, e.g. "none was injured." I prefer "none were injured"

Homer is not dead

"Homer sings," "Homer writes," "Homer speaks of the *wine-dark* sea" these are correct expressions, for Homer, being dead, yet speaketh—in the present tense

"Nom de plume"

If anyone pulls you up for using this phrase you have a good defence. It is true that the French term for pseudonym is *nom de guerre*, and that *nom de plume*, though French, has never been French usage. But *nom de plume* may now be properly regarded as good English formed on the analogy of *nom de guerre*. Of course there is *pen-name*, which literally translates *nom de plume*, but it is somewhat clumsy and has a made-up look. "Pseudonym" is safe but *nom de plume* is allowable, and logically more fitting.

Compare "to" or "with"

It is nonsense to say, as some do, that "compare with" is right, and "compare to" wrong, each is right in the right place. To compare one thing to another is to liken that thing to the other. "To compare with" does not go so far, it is used in the sense of to examine how far similarity or difference goes. "Compare to" asserts similarity, "compare with" searches for it.

Fish or fishes?

When "fishes" and when "fish?" It is a matter of context and literary effect, to frame a rule would be hazardous. "There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes, but what are they among so many?" (John vi, 9). Here "fishes" is better than fish. "We remember the fish which we did freely eat in Egypt" (Numbers xi, 5). Here "fish" is better than fishes. *Fish* is used generically, *fishes* to indicate separate fish for greater vividness. Thus "Dogfish are ravenous creatures and devour enormous numbers of smaller fishes. The eggs of these fish [dogfish] are remarkably large."

Hoofs—hooves

Both plurals are correct, and an author sensitive to prose and sound-effect uses the one he feels

to be the more musical or expressive. Thus Tennyson has the purposely harsh line, "Clattering flints batter'd with clanging hoofs," but Robert Louis Stevenson expresses a more distant and diffused sound in "The hooves of many horses beating the wide pastures in alarm."

A blind alley

A sentence may be begun in such a way that it cannot be grammatically ended under the same scheme. Thus Samuel ("Erewhon") Butler wrote "There can be no real peace until either he or I *are* where the wicked cease from troubling." After "either" and "or" a singular verb is of course required. Here, is it to be *is* or *am*? Obviously neither, the sentence is a blind alley. Butler could have avoided the difficulty by writing "Until one or the other of us is where the wicked cease from troubling."

Apropos

"Apropos," and "apropos of," are good usages, but "apropos to," though frequently used in the sense of "appropriate to," is not to be recommended. "Apropos" is of course the French *à propos*, meaning to the purpose or plan, hence concerning. Where the previous context makes clear what is referred to "apropos" can

properly be used without a preposition, thus "he told a story that was very apropos " Where the word has the meaning of "with regard to" or "as suggested by," the preposition "of" should follow, as in "apropos of a recent discussion," here the words are used to introduce something that follows from or is suggested by the discussion "Apropos to" is correct where something in Hazlitt's essay, 'On Going a Journey,' very opposite is introduced, as in "There is a passage apropos to what you have said " Here "of" would be almost misleading

ff and the "long s"

You have perhaps been puzzled by the use of *ff* in spelling some surnames beginning with F, as in *ffoulkes* or *Ffoulkes* The explanation is that in mediæval manuscripts *ff* was used as a capital F Certain old families retain this form—some using *Ff* and others *ff*

The old-fashioned "long s," found in seventeenth-eighteenth century English books, is sometimes called an *f*, but if the two letters are carefully compared the difference in the position and length of the cross bars will be noticed The late Latin *s*, coming between vowels, was pronounced as *z*, but as there was no letter *z* in the Latin alphabet, the old English or German *s* was used for both sounds.

"Much" or "very" surprised, etc ?

The proper choice between "much" and "very" before participles is often difficult. *Very* goes before a pure adjective—very true, very short, very beautiful—whereas "much" goes before past participles which have a strong adjectival character though they are not formal adjectives, thus much troubled, much stimulated, much amazed (See p 122)

The difficulty is to decide whether the past participle has taken on the character of an adjective sufficiently to warrant the placing of *very* before it. You can properly say "I was very tired," but not "He was very irritated." "Tired" has become an adjective, and takes "very", "irritated" remains a participle and takes "much" or "very much."

But this broad rule does not always work. Thus, you can properly say "I was very surprised to hear it" if you refer to your surprise at the moment, and you can say "I was much surprised to hear it" if what you hear was contrary to your expectations and your feeling of surprise continues.

It seems to me that Professor Wessen is wrong when he says in his useful book, *Words Confused and Misused*. "*I shall be very pleased to hear from you* is one of the letter writer's most common errors." The letter-writer is here contemplating

only the receipt of a reply (i.e. the moment of its arrival) and his "pleased," being the equivalent of "glad," takes "very." But I make this distinction between *first* and *lasting* pleasure (or surprise) with some hesitation

A VERSE IN THE *ELEGY*

GRAY'S *Elegy* is so endeared to the national memory that no dispute about the meaning of a single line or verse in it can be ignored. I once quoted one of its most poignant stanzas with the punctuation as follows

*For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?*

A reader suggested that I had wrongly inserted two commas in the first line and so had changed Gray's meaning. Without these commas the sense, he points out, would be "For who e'er resigned this pleasing anxious being [to become] a prey to dumb forgetfulness?"—i.e. "Who ever was reconciled to the thought of being forgotten?" But this would be to anticipate the purport of the two following lines, and therefore to deprive these of some of their force

Moreover, in the previous stanza, the poet has described the churchyard dead as without "fame and elegy," and therefore as being *themselves* individually forgotten. Hence the commas form a parenthesis—"Who (to dumb forgetfulness a prey) ?" The idea is simply that they resigned life itself, not that they resigned it *to* something. So, at least, I have always read the disputed line which has the two commas in most editions and in Palgrave's scrupulously edited *Golden Treasury*. Yet a doubt remains.

BIBLE ENGLISH

I WAS asked to comment on the sentence, "But whom say ye that I am?" (Matthew xvi, 15) "Were the translators justified in using the word *whom*?" Yes, because in their day and generation the makers of the Authorized Version were justified in adopting what was then, but no longer is, the *whom* usage. In the Revised Version (1885) "*whom*" becomes "*who*" in agreement with modern usage. It is of little use to apply to Bible language the grammar of to-day. Although the Revisers of fifty years ago did correct *whom* in this passage, they left unaltered "Our Father *which* art in Heaven."

Shakespeare, according to grammar to-day, is

grossly incorrect, when he makes Philip the Bastard say (*King John*, iv, 2)

going to seek the grave
Of Arthur, whom they say is kill'd to-night
On your suggestion

"Whom" is not governed by "killed", its antecedent being "Arthur," the words should read "Arthur, *who* (they say) is kill'd " Similarly, in *Measure for Measure*, the grammar of to-day is flouted by Elbow when he says of his wife, "*whom*, I thank heaven, is an honest woman " Put "I thank heaven" into parenthesis, and *who* is seen to be the required nominative to "is "

We have no need to correct either the Bible or Shakespeare in view of the obstinate habit of many living writers, and the Press, generally of using "whom" where "who" is required The following is a typical example of this error: "Mr —, whom we are glad to see has fully recovered his health . . " Here "whom" should be "who "

"ROAD"—"STREET"

A DISTINCTION WITH A DIFFERENCE

A FRIEND asked me to explain to him the difference between a road and a street. It is not necessary to know the difference in order to use one or the other, and putting his question my friend remarked, "After all, *street* and *road* are synonymous."

They might be true synonyms to judge by their indiscriminate use by municipal authorities. In almost any town you will find roads branching from streets, streets branching from roads, and roads and streets running parallel to each other—a confusion that may well suggest that "road" and "street" are synonymous. But they are no more synonymous than *river* and *stream*, or *shore* and *beach*, or *branch* and *bough*. True synonyms do not exist. (See p 91)



The derivations of *road* and *street* are widely different. A road is *riding*, a *street* is an artificial stratum. "Road" comes from the old English verb, *ridan*, to ride. It is allied to "raid." When, in *Henry VIII*, Shakespeare makes Griffith describe Wolsey's last ride from York to Leicester, and puts into his mouth the words, "At last with

“ROAD”—“STREET”

easy roads he came to Leicester,” he means by easy ridings, in this instance, easy journeys on mule-back. A road is essentially a riding or riding place (hence the “roads” in which vessels ride at anchor). A road contemplates its beginning and its end, which are usually at a considerable distance from one another; hence, also, its figurative uses in the “road to ruin,” “road to fortune,” “no royal road to Learning,” etc.



A *street* (from Latin *strata*) is a paved road, and although the Romans attached the word to very long (paved) roads like Watling Street, this usage is obsolete in modern practice, and a street has come to mean a road of limited length within the boundaries of a town or village. It might be described as a domesticated road. A street, moreover, is a populated length of road, and includes not only the houses, shops, etc. (which may be absent in a road) on both its sides, but even its clustered associations; hence the figurative use of “Fleet Street” for journalism, “War-dour Street” for cinema business, “Bond Street” for luxury, and such expressions as “man in the street,” “up your street,” “roused the street,” “street market,” etc.

THE BANNED ADJECTIVE

SINCE Mr Shaw brought it into his brilliant play, *Pygmalion*, and caused a first-night audience to gasp, it has to some extent shed its asterisks. These were never needed, because *bloody* is not an oath or even an expletive. It has no sacred associations, the suggestion that the word is a corruption of "By'r Lady" may be dismissed as fantastic.

"Blood" has long been used as a short synonym of pedigree—good pedigree—in such phrases as "prince of the blood" and "blue blood." In the early eighteenth century the meaning was extended to a swell, a fop, a roystering man about town. "Drunk as a blood" was the equivalent of "drunk as a lord," and "bloody drunk" meant no more than drunk in that way.

Thus "bloody" is no more than an intensive of the same type as "awfully," "terribly," "fearfully." In violent speech men instinctively relieve their feelings in terms that carry the idea of something vital, tremendous, or appalling ("Blood and thunder"). "Blood" being figuratively synonymous with life itself ("The blood is the life"), came with ease into this vocabulary—though the words of Moses (just quoted) relate only to the blood of certain animals which were killed to be human food, and had no sacred significance. It will be remembered that when

Mr Roker, of the Fleet Prison, resented Mr Pickwick's remarks on the accommodation for the wretched debtors he "muttered in an excited fashion certain unpleasant invocations concerning his own eyes, limbs, and circulating fluids" Whatever his actual words, he was appealing to the intimate physical make-up of Roker



In seventeenth and early eighteenth century novels and plays, "bloody" was used merely for emphasis Swift, writing to his Stella, remarks that it has been "bloody hot walking to-day" When Fielding wrote "This is a bloody positive old fellow," and Foote, in his play, *The Englishman in Paris*, "She's a bloody fine girl," readers and playgoers were no more shocked than we are to-day by such expressions as "It makes my blood boil," or "a bloody battle," or, in *The Ancient Mariner*, by "The bloody sun at noon right up above the mast did stand"

The extremely common use of the word as an "intensive" is probably due to the very fact that, unlike "Blimey!", it does not suggest an oath As Mr Robert Graves points out in his little book, *The Future of Swearing and Improper Language*, it is treated, however coarsely, as an ordinary word There can be no blasphemous quality in such a phrase as "I'll bloody well show

you," or in the shout of delight attributed to a bargee at a boat-race, "Hooray! hooray! hoo-bloody-ray!" Even as an intensive this banned adjective is diluted by its frequency, as in the verses entitled *The Australian Poem*, which appeared in the *Sydney Bulletin* nearly forty years ago. This is the last of its four stanzas as it was printed

He plashed into the —— creek,
 The —— horse was —— weak,
 The stockman's face a —— study!
 And though the —— horse was drowned
 The —— rider reached the ground
 Ejaculating "——!"

But to explain is not to defend. One cannot justify the free use of a term which has become taboo through low and reckless usage and which, as Ruskin said, is the more corrupt because it retains the form of a harmless word "while corrupting the thought in it."

"GOT" AS A BLOT

THE use of *got* to indicate mere possession—as in such phrases "I have got," "Have you got?"—is as ugly as it is unnecessary. Dr Otto Jespersen (*Essentials of English Grammar*) says that this intrusion of *got* is clearly due to the frequent use of "have" as a mere auxiliary. "*Have* was not

METICULOUS

felt to be strong enough to carry the meaning of 'possess' and therefore had to be reinforced " But this reinforcement is 'practised much too often Thus "I have got a knife" is justified only if the speaker has there and then obtained a knife for the purpose in hand, otherwise "I have a knife" is the right expression "I have got no time" is pardonable if the speaker has just discovered the fact, but in normal conditions "I have no time" is sufficient and preferable

METICULOUS

SOME words become fashionable on a sudden, like some table-decorations or a particular breed of dog The impulse to bring them into talk or writing is so strong that accurate use of them becomes a secondary consideration Such a word is *meticulous* Its ultimate root is the Latin *metus*, fear, but its nearer original is the late and non-classical *meticulosus* which meant timid, fearful The very common misuse of the word arises from forgetting this fear element in its meaning and application But although "meticulous" means timid it would be ridiculous to say "She felt meticulous in the dark" The word implies a definite fear of making a mistake, of "putting one's foot in it" Therefore the use of "meticulous" to signify exact, scrupulous, is correct only

where it suggests *fear* of going wrong, of breaking a rule, of false technique. It should not, however, be used in the simple senses of careful, scrupulous, or punctilious. Fowler (*Modern English Usage*) finds it correctly used in the phrase "quiet and meticulous craftsmanship," i.e. craftsmanship in which the fear of inexactness or error is present. But used in the ordinary sense of thorough or zealous the word has no justification in such expressions as "meticulous study," "meticulous criticism," or "meticulous about having his ideas carried out." One need not quarrel with Sir Edmund Gosse's reference, quoted in Webster's Dictionary, to "the excessive and meticulous civility of Addison," because the implication is that Addison's excessive politeness arose from his fear of giving offence. In short, "meticulous" is one of those words that are needed much less often than they are used. By over-using it Arnold Bennett gave it much of its vogue.

THOSE NINE TAILORS

A SENTENCE that is correct in grammar and construction may convey opposite meanings to different people. Thus the old proverb "Nine tailors make a man" is commonly used in the disparaging sense that nine tailors are equal to only

THOSE NINE TAILORS

one man, or that a tailor is but the ninth part of a man. A seventeenth-century poet wrote

*Some foolish knave, I think, at first began
To slander that three tailors make a man*

But the saying can be taken in the honourable sense that nine tailors can "make a man" of a poor wretch who would not become one without their help. Hence the following interpretation of the saying, which will be new to many readers

Once upon a time there was a poor man who was destitute and in rags. Towards evening he came into a town, entering at that part where tailors plied their trade. In one shop a tailor had pity on him, and calling together his brethren "What can we do for this poor man? I have no money to give him." "Nor I," said another. "But," said a third, "we have many scraps and we can ply our needles, let us make him clothes of our scraps." This was no sooner said than agreed upon, and the nine tailors plied their needles late into the night and finally presented him with a suit, made of scraps, it is true, but so skilfully joined and binded that the suit was a fine one. The poor man was overwhelmed with gratitude and, falling on his knees, exclaimed "You nine tailors have made a man of me!"

Which was born first, the proverb or the story?

THE TENDER CONSCIENCE

Some of its Inconveniences

THE bricklayer who, when he was shown that a wall he was engaged on was out of the perpendicular, replied, "Wot abaht testing that plumb-line?" typifies many speakers of English who suddenly conceive doubts about words and phrases which have long been established in good usage

The length to which such doubts can be carried was brought home to me when I was asked whether that everyday phrase "enjoy oneself" can be justified. The inquirer argued that it is wrong we can enjoy a party, the singing, dancing, the company, etc., but "surely not ourselves." Here we meet the too tender conscience. To speak of enjoying oneself is actually more fitting than to speak of enjoying music or cold chicken. For to *enjoy* is to *enter into* a state of joy just as to envelop is to wrap *in*, and entrap to trap *in*. The French *enjoyer* (injoy) has the same significance. This basic meaning of "enjoy" (to be in a joyous state) can be illustrated from many old writers. In 1549 we find the verb used intransitively. "he never enjoyed after", and in 1610, "No meat will

enjoy or do good to him ” More logically, but just as uselessly, one might question the transference of self-enjoyment to the things enjoyed, but the transference of the thing enjoyed, either way, is in accordance with the genius of the language.

“*For all time*”

An objection just as finicking was raised by a reader to the expression “for all time” used of the gift or dedication of a building or piece of land to the nation “Who can say what *all time* means—for how many or how few thousands of years it will run?” It is precisely because no one knows this that the word *all* is used It indicates that no withdrawal or cessation of the gift need be feared Thus Mark Antony at Caesar’s funeral

*His private arbours and new-planted orchards,
On this side Tiber, he hath left them you
And to your heirs FOR EVER*

The impossibility of expressing the eternal in terms of time is shown in the fact that we attempt to do so in such contradictory yet synonymous phrases as “for all time” and “timeless.” Some discrepancies between thought and speech cannot be bridged.

Restive

This is another example of idiomatic change which seems to make the modern use of a word incorrect "Restive" once meant inclined to rest, unwilling to stir It now means the opposite, and this meaning has become the only meaning. No writer of to-day would contrast imagination, as being "quick and agile" with the passions, as being "in comparison slow and restive" Yet I am quoting so great a writer as David Hume

How did this reversal of usage come about? The answer is that "restive" came to mean *stubbornly* inclined to rest, unwilling to go forward—hence refractory, fidgety, unmanageable The adjective was transferred from the cause to the effect, and "restive" was used for its opposite, "restless" It is so used by Byron in *Don Juan*

*It is a hard although a common case
To find our children running restive,*

and to-day in such sentences as "He becomes restive under dictation"

"Un-" before nouns

A conscientious objector wishes to persuade me that nouns like *untruth, unbelief, unwisdom, unconstraint, unchastity*, etc., are wrongly constructed, and, to use his own expression, only endurable

under "the chloroform of custom" For "chloroform" substitute "liberty"—the right of the users of their native language to form and adapt it to their purpose Their authority to do so is precisely the authority—not the chloroform—of general consent, i e of idiom

But, it will be asked, if "untruth" and "unwisdom" are correct, why not *unspeed*, *undepth*, *unweight*, etc The sufficient answer is that "untruth" and "unwisdom" have been adopted, the words in italics have not been adopted—yet But "unspeed" may have a future, already we say "unspeeding"

"Fuller"

Language is not, never has been, and never will be mathematical Its business is with thought *in the making*, not with accepted axioms which can be expressed in only one way, like "A point has position but not magnitude" I have known objection to be taken to the words of the hymn, "Life may richer, fuller be," on the ground that if a thing is full it cannot be fuller But the mind demands for its convenience the notion of degrees of fullness, and will not be denied the use of such intensives as "very full," "too full," etc, because they hurt tender consciences

THE TENDER CONSCIENCE

Can "no reply" be received?

Is the sentence, "We have received no reply," correct? It is argued that the phrase belies its meaning and should read "We have not received any reply "

Both expressions are correct *No* is here an adjective meaning *not a*, *not any*, or *none* (of which it is an abbreviation) But *no* can be used wrongly in various ways, as is explained by Fowler in *Modern English Usage* *No* does not mean *not* except when it is an adverb following *or*, as in, "Whether or no " It is used incorrectly for *not* in the following sentence "We can hardly give the book higher praise than to say of it that it is a no unworthy companion of Moberly's *Atonement* " "A no unworthy" is wrong because "no" includes "a " Either *a* should be omitted, or *not* substituted for *no*

Too much grammar

A boy wrote "There was a Punch and Judy show and a sandpit" His teacher carefully altered this to read "There *were* a Punch and Judy show and a sandpit " Both versions were correct, but the teacher suffered from an inflamed conscience In a sentence like this it is not necessary to adapt the verb to more than one thing The *and* does the business The teacher would

have passed, "There was a Punch and Judy show, also a sandpit "

"You cannot better it"

A troubled reader wrote "Have you noticed the increasing use of *better* as a verb?—'You can't better it ' I can't bear it! Is there any justification for its use?"

There is full justification "Better" has been used as a verb from the time of King Alfred by such writers as Sir Thomas Malory, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, and Ruskin, and it occurs at least once in the Authorized Version (Mark v, 26), where we read of a certain woman who had "suffered many things of many physicians, and spent all that she had, and was nothing *bettered* " Does anyone object to *worsen* (make worse)? It is of equal antiquity and authority

"Of a morning"

The principal of a technical college objects to such a construction as, "When I am shaving of a morning," "nothing to do of a night " The too tender conscience again The usage is not only defensible, it is beyond criticism, having been good literary English since Wyclif employed it in his fourteenth-century translation of the Old Testament Shakespeare has it In Samuel

THE TENDER CONSCIENCE

Richardson's great novel, *Pamela* (1741), you may read "Of a Thursday my dear Father and Mother were married" John Henry Newman, most fastidious of writers, refers in one of his letters to "my practice to walk *of a day* to Nuneham," and Carlyle, in *Sartor Resartus*, has, "All the Intellect of the place assembled of an evening" In such phrases "of" is used to indicate the time only generally, or, as in the quotation from *Pamela*, in a light, careless way "Of a morning" is analogous to "of yore," "of sorts," "of a piece with," "of late"

"Was" or "is"?

"I went to several steamship offices, but none of them knew where Timbuctoo is"

An argument, described as "fierce," arose on the question whether *is* should have been *was* so that the past tense would have followed the past tense

Not necessarily The confession of ignorance is past, but Timbuctoo *is* where it *was* Either tense may be used Fowler (*Modern English Usage*) aptly describes *was* as "normal," and *is* as "vivid," i.e. as contemplating the permanent situation of Timbuctoo, apart from the inquiry at the steamship offices

The Preposition-at-end bogey

The decree that a sentence or phrase must not end with a preposition is nonsense. To enforce it would be to impoverish the language. It would forbid such natural idioms as, "What is it all about?", "What were you thinking of?", "He had no one to play with", "What is he aiming at?" These, it may be said, are colloquialisms, but the rule, if obeyed, would kill many a sentence in literature as fine as Richard Hooker's "Shall there be a god to swear by and not one to pray to?"

All that can be said is that the thing can be well or ill done, and therefore can be avoided both wisely and stupidly. It is impossible to defend the nursemaid who asked, "What did you want to choose that book *to be read out of* to for?" Those who insist that the preposition must always be placed before the noun or pronoun it governs are either strict Latinists or finicky English grammarians. By all means let it stand before its object if it falls there by nature—as indeed it does in most simple sentences. It is mainly with the interrogative and relative pronouns that the trouble comes, since it is then that idiom begins to oppose formal grammar. In English it is idiomatic to keep the interrogative pronoun (or adjective) as the first word in the sentence. To put a preposition before it is therefore to go against idiom. So "Which house are you going

to?" is better English than "To which house are you going?" Again, "That is the room in which I slept" is English in tight creaking boots, why not let it march freely and comfortably, and say "That is the room I slept in"? Good writers honour the "rule" by breaking or observing it as they think fit

"I am . . . to-morrow"

The dislocation of tense in such sentences as "I *dine* at the Town Hall to-morrow," and "We *are seeing* the Smiths on *Thursday*," is more apparent than real. The present tense is used to make the statement more vivid. Idiom ousts formal grammar and, as usual, to advantage.

Much ado

Inflammation of conscience can alone account for the office dispute thus described to me

"Confirming the proposals discussed yesterday between the writer and yourself

"I propose that" etc., etc

"One camp maintains that the first two lines are not a sentence and therefore incorrect. The other camp upholds that these two lines are in the nature of a heading, and that it is permissible to commence a fresh paragraph and sentence with 'I propose, etc., etc., as the true commencement of the letter'"

The disputed sentence is in the nature of a heading—on the lines of that above Chapter XX in *The Pickwick Papers* “Showing how Dodson and Fogg were men of business, and their clerks men of pleasure” If the introductory words had been italicized or enclosed in brackets no question could have arisen, but the simplest device was to place a comma, instead of a full stop, after “yourself” and proceed with the rest of the sentence

“As a present”

“She lost the ring which she had received as a present” I was asked to say that *as* ought to be *for* Not at all what *as* does in this sentence is to conjunct the receiving of a ring and the receiving of a present, so making them one act Similarly, *as* follows verbs like “acknowledge,” “regard,” “treat,” and many others “He was welcomed as a brother” It is used to introduce, says the O E D, a complemental nominative or objective, and J R Green (*Short History of the English People*) supplies a double example in the clause “who still looked on themselves as mere settlers and who regarded the name of ‘Irishman’ as an insult” “Received as a present” is good English, “received *for* a present” is not.

"Very lukewarm"

A head master wrote this sentence "The result of this division was that the West was very lukewarm in its support of the Christian against the Turks" Can a thing, I was asked, be very lukewarm? Yes, because (apart from the fact that "lukewarm" is only relative to "hot" and "cold" and admits of degree) it is here used, figuratively, in the sense of apathetic, supine, indifferent, or nonchalant—all words to which "very" can be prefixed

Often

Some people make it a point of conscience to pronounce the *t* in "often," and regard dropping it as a slovenly usage Yet they cheerfully drop it in "soften," "listen," "castle," "bustle," "epistle," etc Good custom now favours "of'n"

ANYWHEN

It is odd that this word, which does for time what "anywhere" does for space, has not passed more freely into the language Either word, one thinks, might have preceded the other in common speech "Anywhen" is recognized by the Oxford English Dictionary, Webster's, and Standard dictionaries as a dialect word It is heard in Sussex Carlyle used it in *Sartor Resartus* and again in his

Cromwell "There has been none braver anywhere or anywhen" He also uses "any whither" which (as two words) occurs in the A V Bible (1 Kings 11, 36) "And the King sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Build thee an house in Jerusalem, and go not forth thence any whither"

-ISE OR -IZE?

NOT a few readers are perplexed by the varying practice of using *s* or *z* in words like "criticise," "recognise," "organise," etc In recent years the drift has been to *z*, but one never knows which letter to expect The King's Regulations for the Navy have "authorise," those of the Army "authorize"

Newspapers go their own way As Mr A P Herbert (in *What a Word!*) points out "In your letter to the *Times* you will be printed 'realize,' but in the *Daily Telegraph* you will find that you have written 'realise' And if you have strong views and tell these papers that you will not write to them again it is just possible that neither of them will mind very much" Most printers have a stock answer to such complaints and it admits of no reply *s* or *z*, as it may be, is "*the custom of the house*" How the two letters will be distributed in this note I have no idea

Certain words ought never to be given *z* They are those which are clearly derived from the

French—for example, “advertise,” which is from the verb *avertir*, meaning to warn, notify, or advise (in the Business English sense) This verb takes *s* in various conjugations, thus *Avertissez-le de venir*, Tell him to come Follow, therefore, our correct Bible spelling If you did not know that “advertise” is in the Bible, look up Ruth iv, 4 There, to be sure, it bears a somewhat higher and holier meaning than the “Advertisement Department” deserves, but it is the same word How Shakespeare spelt it when he wrote it is neither here nor there, but even the toughest printers allow him to be an *esser*, when he makes Hector say,

*I was advertised their great general slept,
Whilst emulation in the army crept.*

Many other words retain the *s* of their French originals, among them chastise, criticise, surprise, exercise, compromise, and despise

Since the suffix *-ize* represents the Greek *-izo* it is well to use it with Greek-derived words like *philosophize*

“THOSE SORT (KIND) OF PEOPLE”

THIS phrase is sometimes condemned as bad grammar, sometimes called a vulgarism, and sometimes tolerated as a colloquialism Fowler, himself always tolerant, puts it among those

irregularities that are "easy to avoid when they are worth avoiding, i e in print, and nearly as easy to forgive when they deserve forgiveness, i e in hasty talk," and he sees in *Those kind of* a sort of inchoate compound equivalent to *those-like* on the analogy of *such-like*

Dr Jespersen says, with equal indulgence, that in "those kind of" and "those sort of" we may look upon *kind* and *sort* as unchanged plurals as in "a hundred *head* of cattle "

In good writing the simple solution is—"People of that sort" or "kind "

SOME DISPUTED PHRASES

Under (or in?) the circumstances

WHICH phrase should be used? Some people stoutly insist that *in* is the right preposition for *encircling* conditions. But I agree with Fowler (*Modern English Usage*) "The objection to *under* the circumstances and insistence that *in* the circumstances is the only right form (because what is *round* us is not *over* us) is puerile. The circumstances means the state of affairs and may naturally be conceived as exercising the pressure under which one acts."

Yet the Oxford English Dictionary finds a distinction between the two forms. "Mere situation is expressed by '*in* the circumstances', action affected is performed '*under* the circumstances'." Thus Dr South preached, "Every hypocrite, under the same circumstances, would have infallibly treated Him with the same barbarity," whereas Froude in his *History of England* has, "Who found himself in circumstances to which he was unequal." Here "under circumstances" will not do.

Averse—to or from?

"Averse to" is now much the more frequent form. Thomas Gray, in his lines *On a Favourite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Goldfishes*, has "What cat's averse to fish?", John Locke wrote "Nature has put into man an aversion to misery," and Macaulay "He had been averse to extreme courses."

The *to* usage is logical if we mean (as we do) that we have a *turning-away-from* feeling *to* or *toward* a thing that repels us.

"May the best man win!"

I was asked, "Can you defend the use of the expression 'May the best man (or team) win!'?" We are taught that *better* should be used when there are only two combatants, but under such a ruling the expression would lose much of its force and snap." I agree, and defend "May the best man win," though only two sides are involved. The expression originates in the contemplation of an unspecified number and is not altered when the number turns out to be only two. It is a large, free exclamation, uttered with a certain abandon and finality, and does not call for grammatical adjustment at the expense of custom and emotion. I am defending, not bad grammar, but good English.

Good manners is

In London buses this notice appears "Good Manners is the secret of Road Safety" Some passengers have asked whether this is grammatical *is manners* a collective singular noun taking *is*?

Yes, because in this context "manners" is not the plural of "manner" but stands for general behaviour This usage is very old In the fourteenth-century English saying, "Manners *makyth* man" In the *Taming of the Shrew*, Shakespeare makes Tranio say to Biondello,

*Sirrah, not for my sake, but your master's, I advise
You use your manners discreetly in all kind of
companies*

Here "manners" stands for best behaviour Dryden in one of his plays makes a character say, "Have you no more manners than to overlook a man when he is writing?" Again "manners" stand for a quality of conduct and may be regarded as a collective singular noun, just as it is clearly singular in such a sentence as, "My boy, it is not good manners to eat peas with a knife" The notice in the London Transport buses is better and more to the point than "Good Manners are the secret of Road Safety" I may add that the Oxford English Dictionary recognizes "manners" as being singular in such contexts

"By and large"

Someone wrote to me "Whatever does it mean? And yet editors and writers use it with unction"

"By and large" is of nautical origin. In certain weather a ship would be sailed alternately close-hauled and free, and was then said to be keeping her course *by and large*. More technically the phrase meant "to the wind (within six points) and off it". Edward Ward, the humorist, used it in 1707 in the figurative sense of in all ways or respects. It now means broadly speaking—to all intents and purposes—on the whole—we without regard to exceptions that do not affect the result. It is a useful and racy expression on occasion.

more than he could help

Someone is always discovering that this expression, heard on every tongue, is illogical. So it is (see LOGIC NOTWITHSTANDING, p. 57). Logically it should be "He did not walk more than he could not help (walking)," but who could make this clumsy correction? The better alternative would be "He did not walk more than he was compelled." But who would seek refuge in it? Although I have not seen the point raised, I have sometimes wondered whether in this and

like expressions *help* is not a relic of the word in its old sense of to heal, to succour, giving the meaning, "He did not walk more than he could heal his hurt avoid distress " It was the sense in Milton's picture of Sabrina visiting

*the herds along the twilight meadows,
Helping all urchin blasts*

"ON EITHER SIDE"

SOME people are irritated by the use of "either" for "each" or "both " One such wrote "To me it seems simply silly to say that troops were on *either* side of the road when the meaning is that they were on *each* or *both* sides " The use of either in the sense to which my correspondents object is well established How would these logicians re-write this short sentence "The two friends were sitting on either side of the fireplace"? Here "each" or "both" could involve optical illusions

"CONNECTION" OR "CONNEXION"?

ONE is often asked which of these spellings is correct Each must be deemed correct, "connexion" because the termination is the Latin *xion*, and "connection" because our original verb

connex has been replaced by *connect* (after the verb *connectare*) since the sixteenth century. The Oxford English Dictionary favours "connexion" but of course allows "connection," which is now generally used. "Connexion" should be adopted when reference is made to a sect or denomination such as the Methodist Connexion, this usage having been introduced by Wesley and his followers.

RELIABLE

THE still heard objection to "reliable"—in the sense of that may be relied on, trustworthy—is nearly played out. Dr Inge, discussing common blunders in speech, accepts it with faint damns. Dean Alford, in his *Queen's English* of seventy years ago, thought it "hardly legitimate" because we do not rely a man, we rely *on* him, so that the word ought to be rely-on-able. Nevertheless the Oxford English Dictionary justifies the present usage on the ground that it is found in good English writers of the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. It was only in or about 1850 that the word entered common written and spoken English. Then the purists raged and the pedants imagined vain things. Their logical remedy would have been to substitute "reliable on" or "on reliable" for "reliable," but they were satis-

fied to denounce Mr Gladstone had no scruple about "reliable chronology," nor Trevelyan, in his *Life of Macaulay*, about "a reliable guide." Some docile souls, frightened out of "reliable," have taken refuge in "dependable," not seeing that technically the word ought to be depend-on-able. Their argument is laugh-at-able.

The fact is that you can drop words into the dustbin and then want them. An illustration is supplied by Coleridge's own use, on the one hand, of the term a "reliable pledge," and, on the other, his fierce objection to "talented" when it first appeared in print. Thinking to damn it for all time, he wrote in 1832 "I regret to see that vile and barbarous vocable *talented* stealing out of the newspapers into the leading reviews and most respectable publications of the day. The formation of a participle passive from a noun is a licence that nothing but a very peculiar felicity can excuse." Dr Johnson had objected, on the same ground, to Gray's use of "honeyed" or "honied." But convenience, if not "peculiar felicity," has since given us "wooded," "booted," "moneyed," "tailored," "cultured," and a host of similarly-made words.

THE "MUTUAL" MISTAKE

THE common misuse of "mutual" cannot be pardoned. It is, so to speak, arithmetically wrong. "Our Mutual Friend" is therefore wrong. Friendship can be "mutual" only between two persons; a third cannot be taken in. Fowler gives this formula *X is or does to Y as Y is or does to X*.

That is mutuality. But it needs to be supplemented thus. You cannot drag in Z and say X is or does to Z as Y is or does to Z, because "mutual" contemplates only two parties, and that in one view, Z, therefore, is not the *mutual* friend of X and Y, he is their *common* friend. Again, "the mutual hatred of A and B" is correct, but "B's mutual hatred of A" is incorrect and should be altered to "B's reciprocal hatred of A." "They paid the expenses mutually" should be "jointly."

PART II

THE TECHNIQUE OF
WRITING

*Punctuation and Style, Spelling Difficulties,
Problems of Address, Mispronounced Words,
Glossary of Literary and Grammatical Terms*

by

FRANK WHITAKER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE compiler of a book on English inevitably owes much to the work of others. I wish to record my own indebtedness to two sources in particular—the books of the late H W Fowler and his brother *Modern English Usage* and *The King's English* (Oxford University Press). They are the best of their kind, and should be consulted by all who wish to make a serious study of the use of words.

I have also derived help from Jespersen's *Essentials of English Grammar* (Allen and Unwin), Meiklejohn's *Grammar* (Meiklejohn & Son), Nesfield's *English Grammar Past and Present* (Macmillan), Sonnenschein's *New English Grammar* (Oxford), F J Rahtz's *Higher English* (Methuen), E H Grout's *Standard English* (Pitman,) and the *Authors' and Printers' Dictionary* (Humphrey Milford). The other dictionaries to which I owe acknowledgements are mentioned in the chapter on Mispronounced Words.

Finally I wish to thank Mr Edward Shanks, Mr W T Williams and Mr G H Vallins for valuable suggestions.

F W.

PUNCTUATION AND STYLE

GRAMMARIANS differ on many points, but on one they are all agreed that it is impossible to lay down hard and fast rules for punctuation. A man's punctuation is part of his style. You cannot put style on the statute book, and you cannot put punctuation within the four walls of logic. Style is growth, it changes from one generation to another, and fashions in punctuation change with it.

A glance at the punctuation of almost any of the early Victorian novelists will bear this out. Their long, stately sentences, with their piled-up subordinate clauses, their lavish use of commas, and their frequent parentheses, are as outmoded to-day as the bustle and mutton-chop whiskers. Take this passage, chosen at a venture from *Martin Chuzzlewit*:

Then there was George Chuzzlewit, a gay bachelor cousin, who claimed to be young, but had been younger, and was inclined to corpulency, and rather overfed himself—to that extent, indeed, that his eyes were strained in their sockets, as if with constant surprise, and he had such an obvious disposition to pimples, that the bright spots on his cravat, the rich pattern on his waist-

coat, and even his glittering trinkets, seemed to have broken out upon him, and not to have come into existence comfortably

No one can read that to-day without feeling a little tight round the collar, yet Dickens's prodigal use of commas was sanctioned by current fashion. Thackeray used them just as freely, as this extract from *Esmond* shows

Lady Castlewood held that ours was undoubtedly a branch of the church Catholic, but that the Roman was one of the main stems, on which, no doubt, many errors had been grafted (she was, for a woman, extraordinarily well versed in this controversy, having acted, as a girl, as secretary to her father, the late Dean, and written many of his sermons, under his dictation)

In that paragraph of sixty-five words there are twelve commas. By a trifling rearrangement we could dispense with at least five of them (those enclosing *no doubt* and *as a girl*, and that following *sermons*) without arousing the least doubt as to what Thackeray meant

The first change to note, then, is that style has become less sluggish, more compact, its pulse now beats more quickly, under the stimulus of the increased pace at which we live. The second change springs from the dual nature of punctuation itself. Until the end of the nineteenth century it

was still influenced by the idea of reading aloud. In addition to its normal, logical function it had developed during the previous three centuries into a complicated system of rhetorical effects. It is important that the difference between these *logical* and *rhetorical* functions should be clearly understood.

We say the commas are used logically in this sentence

Tom, the piper's son, stole a pig

because they are essential to our knowing who stole the pig. Without them we should be uncertain whether the stealer was Tom, the son of the piper, or the son of Tom the piper. The logical value of stops, therefore, consists in showing the syntactical relation between words or groups of words. But besides their logical use, stops are used to indicate emphasis, intonation, emotion and even the speed with which one idea is intended to follow another. Thus the two sentences

I went to town by myself

I went to town, by myself

contain the same number of facts, but owing to the insertion of the comma in the second they do not have precisely the same effect on the hearer. The comma tells us not only that we must make a short pause after *town*, but also

that we must say *myself* in a different way. It emphasises the speaker's lonely state, its effect is purely rhetorical. Again, if we imagine that Tom, in the sentence quoted above, is the person addressed

Tom! The piper's son has stolen a pig!

we realize at once that a new time-element has come into the statement. The first exclamation mark calls for a longer pause after *Tom* and the second speeds up the rest of the sentence. This again is entirely a rhetorical effect.

To-day we have less time for rhetoric than our forbears had. The demand is for clarity, directness. This is a newspaper age, an age in which we write for him who runs, or hurtles through the air, or hangs from a strap in a tube-train. A new strain has come into the language from America. At the time of going to press the catchwords are *slick*, *pep*, *snap*, *punch*, and *zip*.

The effect of all this on punctuation is interesting. We punctuate now more for the eye and less for the ear. We use fewer commas than our grandfathers did, although we still use more than we need to. The colon has been sentenced to death on the ground that it is a time-waster, but because it is still needed for one or two odd jobs, sentence has not yet been carried out. The semi-colon has been placed under suspicion. I am told

that an order was recently issued in the office of one of our most popular newspapers that for all ordinary purposes only full stops and commas must be used. The dash has become a maid-of-all-work, here taking the place of a colon, there of a semi-colon, and elsewhere of the round bracket. There is a tendency to use single instead of double quotation marks. Hardy, for instance, always used inverted commas singly. Shaw has experimented with *arnt*, *cant*, *wont*, *Ive*, and so on (for aren't, can't, won't, I've), with multiplied exclamation marks (I won't!!!), and with spaced-out words in the German fashion (I c a n t do it!) for emphasis. Wells has invented the use of three dots for pinning down an idea which he wants the reader to think over for himself ("Given only the will in men and it would be possible to turn the dazzling accidents of science into a sane and permanent possession, a new starting point. . .")

Even the sedate full stop has not escaped the influence of fashion. Most of us are apt to assume that it at least has always stood firm in a world of change. If we are asked to define its use we have no hesitation in doing so. Every grammar book we pick up tells us that it marks the close of a sentence, and Fowler asserts that the work of the full stop, the exclamation mark, and the question mark "is so clear that mistakes about their use can hardly occur without gross

carelessness " It is quite true, yet I wish sometimes that our grammarians would come closer to realities A hundred years ago Carlyle was habitually making full stops do the work of colons and semicolons Making them end (as he might have written it) passages which could not possibly be described as sentences except under his own rules Later on Blackmore regularly did the same thing Glancing the other day through an old copy of *Lorna Doone* I found I had put a pencil mark opposite this remarkable passage

The ancient outlaw's funeral was a grand and moving sight, more perhaps from the sense of contrast than from that of fitness To see those dark and mighty men, inured to all of sin and crime, reckless both of man and God, yet now with heads devoutly bent, clasped hands, and downcast eyes, following the long black coffin of their common ancestor, to the place where they must join him, when their sum of ill was done, and to see the feeble priest chanting, over the dead form, words the living would have laughed at, sprinkling with his little broom drops that could not purify, while the children, robed in white, swung their smoking censers slowly over the cold and twilight grave and after seeing all, to ask, with a shudder unexpressed, "Is this the end that God intended for a man so proud and strong?"

Whatever the end intended for the ancient outlaw, Blackmore was taking a liberty in ending

such a whacking nominative with a full stop. Apart from that, it would be difficult to find a passage in which a man's style leans more heavily on his stops, and in which the excesses of the middle nineteenth century are more clearly illustrated. For comparison let us take a complex sentence of practically the same length from a modern novel, J B Priestley's *Angel Pavement*

On the wharf, men in caps lent a hand with ropes and a gangway, contrived to spit ironically, as if they knew what all this fuss was worth, and then retired to group themselves in the background, like a shabby and faintly derisive chorus, and men in bowler hats arrived from nowhere, carrying dispatch cases, notebooks, bundles of papers, to exchange mysterious jokes with the ship's officers above, and two men in blue helmets, large and solid men, took their stand in the very middle of the scene and appeared to tell the ship, with a glance or two, that she could stay where she was for the time being because nothing against her was known so far to the police

Here there are a hundred and twenty-one words—three fewer than in the long second part of Blackmore's paragraph, and nearly twice as many as in the paragraph from Thackeray quoted earlier. Yet Mr Priestley uses only sixteen punctuation marks, compared with Blackmore's twenty and Thackeray's fourteen. He might even have gone one better by dropping the comma

after *background*, but as it is, how much easier it is to follow his meaning than that of the others

To return to the full stop The beginning of the twentieth century saw yet another eccentricity—the short, impressionistic, elliptical phrases of Bart Kennedy, each accompanied by its full stop

A ship of sails

Out here in the dark-blue, easy heave of the South Atlantic Ocean Out here moving before the steady, mighty wind Borne along by an even, tremendous, tolerant wind

A ship of sails

Kennedy is forgotten to-day, but he deserves a place in the history of style His method was not, I think, anticipated (except perhaps by Whitman), it was very successful while the novelty lasted, and it still finds echoes in the work of Ernest Hemingway and others Abuse of the full stop was the best advertisement his books ever had, and his plight when I saw him for the last time, selling broadsheets on the kerb, was a sad reminder of the fickleness of literary fashions So much for the grammarians' imperturbable definition "The full stop marks the close of a sentence"

Most of our punctuation problems to-day, I believe, can be traced to the tendencies noted

above We have speeded up style, but the speeding-up process has been too violent for some of our stops Thus by far the commonest punctuation error I know of consists in trying to make a comma do the work of a semicolon, or even of a full stop Even the best writers fall into it Take for example Mr Somerset Maugham I greatly admire Mr Maugham's work, but if my judgement is right his punctuation is often faulty In one of his short stories (*Mr Harrington's Washing*) these passages are to be found within a few lines of each other

"I looked in on my way out, I wanted to tell you my news "

"You must congratulate me, I got my signatures yesterday, and my business is done "

Now it is a safe rule that where two sentences can be joined by a conjunction, and the conjunction is omitted, a stop more powerful than a comma is needed to separate them In both these quotations *because* is understood, and its omission creates a problem in time-values In the second the speaker expresses two main ideas (1) he wants to be congratulated *because* (2) his business is done The statement that he has got his signatures is merely an elaboration of the statement that his business is done A longer pause (that is, a more powerful stop) is therefore required between *me* and *I* than between *yesterday*

and *and* Mr Maugham rightly dispenses with *because* because he wants his dialogue to move easily and quickly, but he should not at the same time ignore the time-value the word represents.

In my opinion he should have put a full stop after *me*. He might justify a semicolon on the ground that the ideas expressed in the first two clauses are too closely associated to be severed by a full stop, but I do not think he could justify the comma. Similar arguments apply to the first of the quoted sentences. Here either a colon, a semicolon or a dash would have served his purpose, but a comma is not enough.

It may be contended that Mr Maugham had a special purpose in using commas, that he was writing dialogue, and wanted to suggest breathlessness or impetuosity. If that were so dashes would have served his purpose even better than commas. But I do not think he had any such idea in mind, for he often uses commas in this way when he is not writing dialogue. This curious quotation is taken from his fine novel *Of Human Bondage*.

He had been used to delight in the grace of St James's Park, and often he sat and looked at the branches of a tree silhouetted against the sky, it was like a Japanese print, and he found a continual magic in the beautiful Thames with its barges and its wharves, the changing sky of London had filled his soul with pleasant fancies.

Here, I am afraid, Mr Maugham's feeling for sentence construction goes entirely to pieces. He specifies three disconnected things that delighted his hero, Philip Carey: St James's Park, the Thames, and the London Sky. He connects the first and second by a conjunction, but not the second and third, which is like saying that the Union Jack is red, and white, blue. This would not have mattered very much by itself, but what throws a spanner into the works is the parenthesis *it was like a Japanese print*, which seems to have no business here at all. On any other day, I am sure, Mr Maugham would have written something like this:

He had been used to delight in the grace of St James's Park, often he sat and looked at the branches of a tree silhouetted against the sky. It was like a Japanese print. He found a continual magic in the beautiful Thames, with its barges and its wharves, and the changing sky of London too had filled his soul with pleasant fancies.

I will give two more examples of misused commas, taken from consecutive pages of another famous novel—E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (Chapter 33):

The assembly was in a tender, happy state unknown to an English crowd, it seethed like a beneficent potion.

Chance brought her into his mind while it was in this heated state, he did not select her, she happened to occur among the throng of soliciting images, a tiny splinter, and he impelled her by his spiritual force to that place where completeness can be found Completeness, not reconstruction

One has only to read the first of these passages aloud to realize that the two commas cannot possibly have the same value. The first helps the reader, the second needs his help. The voice must fall after *crowd* to prepare the mind for a new but related word picture, the imagination must be given time to arrange itself in an attitude of expectancy. Therefore a semicolon is called for.

In the second passage Mr. Forster kicks clean over the traces. First he uses a comma where he should have used a full stop, then a comma where he should have used a semicolon, and finally a full stop where he should have used a dash, to mark an afterthought. Note how much more easily the passage reads when punctuated in this way.

Chance brought her into his mind while it was in this heated state. He did not select her, she happened to occur among the throng of soliciting images, a tiny splinter, and he impelled her by his spiritual force to that place where completeness can be found—completeness, not reconstruction.

In some of the instances given above commas were wrongly used in place of semicolons. There are, however, contexts in which either can be used. Take the sentence

The French are noted for their courage, the Germans for their organizing ability, the Italians for their technical skill, the English for their obstinacy

Here I have used commas to separate the different statements, but semicolons would have served equally well—equally well, that is, from the logical point of view, from the rhetorical point of view they give a certain air of impressiveness to what would otherwise be a plain statement of facts. Emerson, in his essay on Plato, uses semicolons to separate even single words

A discipline it is in logic, arithmetic, taste, symmetry, poetry, language, rhetoric, ontology, morals, or practical wisdom

There is a hint of pompousness here, but I dare say Emerson would have defended his semicolons by saying "I am not cataloguing pots and pans. I have made a statement that ought to impress you, and to make sure that you shall not overlook it I am going to make you read it slowly. Hence the semicolons."

The overworked full stop

While it is generally true that the writers of to-day use fewer stops than those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it does not follow that all the evils of overstopping have been got rid of. Many of them have, but the very desire for brevity and directness which governs our own style has produced an evil of its own. In our popular newspapers especially, but in many of our novels too, we overwork the full stop. We attach too much value to the short sentence. In some Fleet Street newspaper offices the comma and semicolon seem to be regarded almost as signs of loose thinking.

Bart Kennedy's use of the full stop was like the click of a camera shutter, when he had got his picture he went, without standing on ceremony. We use it more conventionally, but without discrimination. A short-winded style has its uses in a newspaper, but in more personal writing it soon palls. The good writer reserves the short sentence for special effects—for contrast, surprise, heightening the excitement, and so on. Notice, for example, how Mr Priestley rounds off the long sentence already quoted from *Angel Pavement*. He has told us, in one great mouthful, how the ship was first approached by the wharf-hands, then by the mysterious men in bowler hats, and

finally by the two solemn policemen who knew of nothing against her. He adds the brief, whimsical comment

The ship, for her part, began to think about discharging her cargo

whereupon the reader, refreshed as much by Mr Priestley's change of rhythm as by his good humour, wants to go on reading him

But the fundamental objection to the spot-plague, as Fowler calls the over-use of full stops, is that it prevents a man from writing as he thinks. Our minds do not work like automatic machines, turning out thoughts of identical shape and size. We think in fits and starts, or, in grammatical terminology, in principal clauses, subordinate clauses, and parentheses. Clauses and parentheses need semicolons and commas to put them into proper relationship with each other. To use only full stops is as unnatural as walking without using the knee-joints.

Comma hunger

The twentieth century has its comma-nuisance too. We still use far more of them than either logic or rhetoric demands. We do so partly through timidity, partly through habit, and partly because the compositor, who has to act while other people argue, always has the last word

The commonest comma-problem arises when we have to use adverbs and adverbial phrases like *indeed, however, in fact, no doubt, nevertheless*. Should they be cut off or not? The progressive often leaves the commas out, the true-blue never. The answer is that it all depends.

Many writers (and all compositors) would insert them in this sentence

There is, no doubt, a good reason for it

on the ground that without them the mind would be led to expect a clause beginning with *that* (there is no doubt *that*, etc.) and might have to go back to the beginning. It is a reasonable argument, but the true progressive (with whose point of view I sympathize) would reply "Sheer superstition! The eye runs so far ahead of the tongue, at any rate in educated people, that there would be no confusion at all. The commas make practically no difference to the sound and none whatever to the sense. Therefore leave them out, I say."

He might go on to argue that we all leave them out when we use some adverbs, however much we may cling to them when we use others. No one would dream, for example, of putting *certainly* between commas in this sentence

You will certainly do as I tell you

but most writers (and all composers) would write

You will, nevertheless, do as I tell you

There is of course a difference of character between the two adverbs *Certainly* is an emphasizing word and *nevertheless*, besides having the comma-associations of a conjunction, has a more argumentative quality But is anything gained by insisting on its parenthetical quality? I doubt it

It is, however, sometimes desirable to cut off an adverb by commas either for ease in reading, for emphasis, or to avoid ambiguity They are needed for instance in the sentence I have just written, where one adverb follows another (It is, *however*, *sometimes*, etc) They are occasionally called for to preserve the sense when the adverb separates an auxiliary from its main verb

According to the latest bulletin he is, happily, improving

although here again some constructions escape the net, e g

I must at least know what was said

They are necessary too to prevent ambiguity when certain adverbial conjunctions are followed by an adjective

Equally, drastic measures must be taken in China

Here *equally* means *It is equally important that* and not that the measures taken in China must be as drastic as those taken elsewhere

Another example of what I regard as an intrusive comma occurs in Nesfield's *English Grammar*. With his customary thoroughness, Nesfield lays down no fewer than sixteen rules for the right use of commas. One of them is that an adverb-clause must be separated by a comma from the main clause. He adds the proviso that the comma is never omitted unless the adverb clause "is either very short or expressed elliptically" (that is, with certain words understood, e.g. *He likes you better than me* for *He likes you better than he likes me*) and then gives these sentences to illustrate what he considers to be the need for a comma

He will succeed, because he works hard

I will gladly do this, if I am allowed

The reader must judge between us, but I myself, looking at these sentences as they stand, without a context, can see neither a logical nor a rhetorical reason for either comma. A context might supply a rhetorical reason for both, but we are given none. As it is the ideas expressed are so closely related, and the mind grasps them so quickly, that it seems to me vexatious to separate them

I have quoted Nesfield not because I question the general truth of his rule, but to show how even a leading authority sometimes seems to prefer rule to reason, and to stress the importance of deciding the precise function of a stop before putting it in. If the clause *if I am allowed* were intended to convey an afterthought, an insinuation that there had already been too much interference, it would not only be desirable, but necessary, to put a comma or a dash before it. Nesfield's rule is perfectly sound too when the associated ideas in two clauses are driven far apart, and it is desirable to give the reader a breathing space. For instance, if the first of his sentences were to be expanded like this

He will succeed in bringing all the engineers and firemen into agreement with the unanimous card-vote decision reached at last year's delegate conference in Glasgow because he works hard

a comma would be necessary after *Glasgow* on grounds which might more appropriately be called physiological than rhetorical

Misleading commas

The over-use of commas is usually irritating rather than dangerous. Sometimes, however, their use is definitely wrong. They are rightly used to cut off a nominative absolute (that is,

an explanatory phrase which has no grammatical relation to the sentence accompanying it), but it is a common error to insert them in the absolute construction itself. For example, it is correct to write

The interrupter having been ejected, the chairman continued his speech

(The italicized phrase is the nominative absolute)
It is incorrect to write

The interrupter, having been ejected, the chairman, etc

because the first comma leads the reader to think that *the interrupter* is the subject of the sentence, whereas its true subject is *the chairman*

Sometimes, on the other hand, the omission of a comma leads the reader to think he is faced by an absolute construction when none was intended. Take the sentence

The interrupter having been ejected, picked himself up and walked off

Here a comma is needed after *interrupter* in order to convey to the reader at once that that word is the subject of the sentence

Another example of a redundant and misleading comma caught my eye as I was glancing just now over a proof of another part of this

book The passage as it appeared in the proof was

bathos a passage which is intended to impress, but which instead arouses ridicule, owing to an incongruous association of ideas

The intrusive comma after *ridicule* leaves the reader uncertain whether the incongruity is intended to impress, or whether it arouses ridicule The definition should therefore read *arouses ridicule owing* etc

One last difficulty in the use of the comma must be mentioned Should we write

The women, the children, and the dogs, got away in the first boat

or

The women, the children and the dogs got etc.

or

The women, the children, and the dogs got etc ?

It would be tedious to enter into all the arguments involved The point to remember is that ambiguity must at all costs be prevented Fowler "unhesitatingly recommends" the first form on the ground that it is the only one to which there is never any objection The necessity for the rule is made clearer in the following sentence

Red, green, blue and white flags were used
Were there four kinds of flags or three—(1)

red, (2) green, (3) blue and white? If there were four a comma after *blue* would remove any possible doubt. But in an enumeration of this kind no comma is necessary after the last adjective (in this instance *white*) because its absence raises no doubt.

The colon

The disappearance of the colon, except for such special uses as announcing a list or a quotation, has already been commented on. I for one regret its going, if only because of its usefulness in linking two antithetical sentences (*He is English I am not*). The distinguishing feature of the colon was that it was never followed immediately by a conjunction. The semicolon, which now does the colon's work, is often followed by a conjunction, and a simple and convenient distinction thus disappears. Even Fowler, who wastes no tears over the colon, admits that it should have been used instead of the semicolon in this sentence:

As apart from our requirements Mr Arnold-Foster's schemes have many merits, in relation to them they have very few.

The semicolon

The chief function of the semicolon is to separate long clauses, especially when they are

joined by an alternative conjunction, and generally to indicate longer pauses than the comma does, e g

I received your message, *otherwise* I should not have come

The secret ballot was advocated on the ground of its being the only efficient safeguard against bribery and intimidation, it was fought for in several Parliaments, but did not pass into law until 1872

Dashes and brackets

The dash, like the comma, is often used nowadays as an easy way out of a punctuation difficulty Its legitimate uses are to mark (1) hesitation, (2) parentheses, (3) interruptions, (4) abrupt turns of thought, (5) passages used in explanation, (6) the springing of a surprise at the end of a sentence, and (7) a summing up of what has gone before Examples of 5, 6, and 7 may be given

The entire army—horse, guns, and foot—was transported in a night

We asked for food and you gave us—nothing

Papers, clothes, jewellery—all went down with the ship

Dashes need careful handling, and should never be used if other stops will do the work The fact that they may be used either singly or in pairs opens the door to ambiguity, for the reader can

never be quite sure until he gets to the end of a sentence whether to prepare his mind for a parenthesis or for one of the other functions enumerated above. For this reason a full stop should never be used in a parenthesis marked by dashes, and independent dashes should not be introduced close together. Personally, I should like to see parenthetical dashes done away with, and brackets put in their place. Brackets are always used in pairs, having seen one, the reader knows the other will come sooner or later. They are therefore free from the drawback I have just mentioned.

Square brackets should be used to indicate that a word or passage has been interpolated in a quotation.

Quotation marks

Inverted commas should be used as sparingly as possible. Their legitimate job is to mark the beginning and end of a quotation or the actual words of a speaker, to indicate the titles of books, plays, pictures, and so on (when italic type is not used), and occasionally to show that a word must not be taken literally. They are also used to clarify a sentence of this kind: *The word "to" is a preposition*. They are wrongly used, when an envelope is being addressed, to remind us that "Clovelly" is a villa in Pinkerton-road,

Balham, and not a village in Devonshire¹, that such phrases as "All that glitters is not gold" are quotations, and not original observations, and that when a man sails in the "Balmoral Castle" the King is not left without a home on Deeside. Names, and quotations as well-worn as proverbs, usually need no quotation marks, neither do most words or phrases used metaphorically. In this sentence

Modern music has side-slipped into chaos
it is unnecessary to quote *side-slipped* for fear that it might be taken literally. It is usually a sign of weakness to rely solely on inverted commas to reverse the meaning of a word, as in the sentence

Politicians, as we know, are "honest" men
but in some contexts it is impossible to convey such a shade of meaning in any other way. In the following passage the inverted commas cannot be omitted without loss of effect

He tells us they are honest. Let us see what these "honest" men have done during their term of office

A speaker of course would indicate the sarcasm by the inflection of his voice

Again, there was a time when inverted commas would have been necessary here

¹ But they cannot be avoided in such a sentence as "Henry is spending Christmas at 'Clovelly'"—meaning the villa in Balham

He was "axed" two years ago, and has done no work since

to show that a man lost his job in the name of economy, and not his head on Tower Hill. As such metaphors become embedded in everyday speech, however, the need for quotation marks goes. Axed, I dare say, needs them no longer.

It's, her's, our's, your's, their's

The use of the apostrophe to indicate that these pronouns are used possessively deserves a headline all to itself, for in my experience it is the commonest mistake in written English. It persists, no doubt, because the wrong form is more logical than the right. We write *man's*, why—having decided to add an *s* to forms which are already possessive—do we not write *her's* and *their's*? The reply is that etymology and logic often go different ways. Though the Bible has *The good of all the land of Egypt is your's*, and Tennyson cocks a snook at common usage with the famous

Their's not to make reply,
Their's not to reason why,
Their's but to do and die

the man who writes *your's*, *their's*, and *it's* to-day runs the risk of being thought illiterate. *It's* must be written only as an abbreviation of *it is*, just as *mine's* is an abbreviation of *mine is*. The

other pronouns (except the indefinite pronoun *one*) never take 's in any circumstances whatever

The use of 's after names ending in -s and -es has been dealt with in Part I, but a simple rule may be given here there are a few Biblical and classical names (Jesus, Moses, Thucydides, Xerxes, Euripides, etc) to which it is inconvenient to add the 's, but with these exceptions it should always be added

The question mark

If *it's* betrays illiteracy, a question mark in round brackets at once points to inexperience. To write

Politicians, as we know, are honest (?) men

is simply a lazy way of writing

We are often told that politicians are honest men We know better

Care should be taken, too, not to put question marks after sentences like this

Ask him who told him that

which is a command, not a direct question Whether a question mark or an exclamation mark should be placed after such sentences as

Will you keep quiet

depends on the state of tension in the room There is a point at which a remark like this ceases

to be an appeal, and becomes instead a command, or even a threat. When that moment comes I should unhesitatingly use an exclamation mark.

To sum up, never use a stop until you have satisfied yourself (a) that it is essential to the *meaning* of what you have to express, or (b) that it helps the *easy flow* of what you have written when this is read aloud. When reading aloud be guided in your choice of commas, semicolons and full stops by the simple rule you learnt at school: keep your voice up when you reach a comma, and drop it when you reach a semicolon or full stop. Vary the length of your sentences, and if you want to emphasize a point see that wherever possible the emphasis comes from your choice of words rather than from the use of other symbols.

SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

FOREIGNERS, said Mark Twain, always spell better than they pronounce. I hope I shall not be accused of spoiling a good joke if I suggest that we English usually pronounce better than we spell. Our spelling standards, it is true, are notoriously inconsistent, and there are many words that are regularly misspelt in print (I came across three in last night's evening paper *contractual*, spelt *contractural*, *gillie*, spelt *ghillie*, and *rodomontade*, spelt *rhod-*), nevertheless the man who hesitates when he has to write *harass* and *embarrass* usually has no difficulty at all in getting his tongue round *cough* and *through*, *plough* and *rough*, *draught* and *fraught*, *holly* and *wholly*, *committee* and *comity*, and the many other masquerading yokefellows, as Fowler might have called them, that make our language the delight of etymologists and the despair of aliens. Such generalizations are easy to make and difficult to prove, but I think it could be maintained that on the whole our ear-memory serves us better than our eye-memory.

The worst speller I have ever known was an elderly artist of unusual gifts. He never forgot a face, and could remember for years afterwards

every detail of a once-seen landscape, but the shape of words made as little impression on his inner-eye as buckshot on a rhinoceros's back. He awoke every morning in an alphabetical twilight, in which all the spelling problems he had ever solved presented themselves afresh. His horror of putting pen to paper was almost comic, but he did write letters occasionally, and I happen to have preserved one that has more than one point of relevance to what I want to say. It lies before me now, written on large sheets in a round, schoolboyish hand, and with an expenditure of effort that one can only guess at.

His object in writing it was to induce me to prepare a dictionary for bad spellers, in which the words were to be so arranged that the phonetic spelling came first and the actual spelling afterwards. He illustrated the need for it in an amusing way. He said he had been suffering from gastric influenza, and had wanted to write a note declining an invitation on that account. "Being uncertain," he told me, "whether *gastric* ended in -c, -k, -ck, -que, or -cque, I sought my dictionary's aid, but in vain, for I had looked up *gha-*, probably through a sub-conscious memory of a previous struggle with *ghastly*. Failing with *gastric* I tried a substitute, but had no better luck with *stumachic*, so I fell back on *bad cold*, which I could manage without misgivings. Finally

I wanted to say that I was *benefiting* from a certain treatment, but as I couldn't find anywhere how many t's there were in it I escaped by saying I was *getting better* "

I have quoted this letter because it illustrates three of the biggest stumbling-blocks in English spelling. The first is that double consonants sometimes have the same sound as single consonants (*gh* and *g*), the second is that different vowels occasionally have an identical sound (as in *stom-ach* and *stum-bling*), the third is the first in another form—the difficulty caused by accommodating suffixes (as in *benefit-ed*, *fit-ted*). A fourth stumbling-block consists of such imported words as *hara-kiri* (commonly misspelt *hari-kari*) and *assagai* (better than *assegai*), in which English is unusually rich, and a fifth is that between our right and wrong ways of spelling we have a wide no-man's-land in which the champions of usage fight the etymological purists in single combat, with here a victory on one side, there a victory on the other, and elsewhere with honours even. The foreign words, having no associations to help us, can be mastered only by eye-training—and it is surprising how the eye *can* be trained by the use of such pencil-and-paper devices as a bold circle round a doubtful letter, a bold stroke through an intrusive letter, and so on. Eye-memory is useful too in no-man's-land, but

here and there the knowledge of a rule will help us, as it will help to resolve some of the other perplexities I have mentioned. In the paragraphs that follow, therefore, I have tried to summarize some of the most useful spelling rules. To the reader who has no intention of memorizing them I recommend the simple practice of making a personal list of words that trip him up, and carrying it about with him. He will often find, as has already been suggested, that the very act of writing a word down will stamp it ineffaceably on his memory.

I. The best known spelling rule of all is probably "Use *i* before *e* except after *c*," but it has many exceptions, e.g. *ancient*, *sufficient*, *efficient*, *deficient*, *proficient*, *inveigh*, *weigh*, *neither*, *reign*, *rein*, *sleigh*, *deign*, *foreign*, *height*, *their*. Two useful deductions can be drawn from this list: (i) that the rule applies *always* (with the exception of *seize*, *weird*, *counterfeit*), to words with the vowel sound *ee* (as in *mece*, *relief*, *conceit*), (ii) that when it is broken "after *c*" the *i* (in practically every case) gives the *c* the sound of *sh*. *Fancied* is an exception.

II. *-ise* or *-ize* as verb endings. This problem comes straight from no-man's-land, where logic has been long fighting hard, but unavailingly, against usage. All the leading authorities, headed by the Oxford English Dictionary, have pointed out that both etymologically and phonetically

-ize (from the Greek *-izo*), should be used in such words as *baptize*, *evangelize* and *epitomize*, yet many English printers persist in spelling them with *-ise*—a practice copied from the French, and having no other justification whatever. There are, however, a few words that are legitimately spelt *-ise*. Fowler gives this list of the more important of them

<i>advertise</i>	<i>demise</i>	<i>exercise</i>
<i>advise</i>	<i>despise</i>	<i>improvise</i>
<i>apprise</i>	<i>devise</i>	<i>incise</i>
<i>chastise</i>	<i>disfranchise</i>	<i>premise</i>
<i>circumcise</i>	<i>enfranchise</i>	<i>supervise</i>
<i>comprise</i>	<i>enterprise</i>	<i>surmise</i>
<i>compromise</i>	<i>excise</i>	<i>surprise</i>

and adds the comment "The difficulty of remembering which these *-ise* verbs are is in fact the only reason for making *-ize* universal, and the sacrifice of significance to ease does not seem justified."

III Single and double consonants before suffixes. When adding a suffix beginning with a vowel to one-syllabled words with a *single* vowel before the final consonant, double the final consonant (as in *slot*, *slotted*). It should not be doubled if the word ends in two consonants, or if it has a double vowel (as in *feast*, *feasting*, *plead*, *pleading*).

In words of two or more syllables the final consonant must be doubled when it is preceded by a single vowel and the stress is on the last syllable. It must *not* be doubled when the accent is *not* on the last syllable. Thus *rebut*, *rebutted*, but *fillet*, *filleted*; *benefit*, *benefited*.

Note that when the suffix begins with a vowel a final *l* (unless it is preceded by a double vowel or compound vowel sound) is usually doubled, even when the stress does not fall on the last syllable, thus, *travel*, *traveller*. *Woollen* and *paralleled* are exceptions. When the suffix begins with a consonant an original double *l* is sometimes retained and sometimes loses one of its *l*'s, thus *ill*, *illness*, but *will*, *wilful*. A single *l* is not doubled before *-ish*, *-ism*, *ist*, and *-ment*, as in *devilish*, *feudalism*, *individualist*, *fulfilment*. An original *ll* is usually kept before *-ness*, e.g. *dullness*, *fullness*, *stillness*.

Words ending in *s* sometimes double it before a suffix beginning with a vowel, and sometimes do not—it is impossible to state a definite rule, but it may be observed that the natural tendency is towards the *ss*. Many words that have retained a strong Latin flavour, however, keep the single *s*, as *buses* (*omnibuses*), *numbuses*, *focuses*, *bonuses*, and *incubuses*, and also the Greek *atlases*. Words that end in *ss* keep them before a suffix whether

it begins with a vowel or not, as in *remiss-ness*, *possess-ing*

When adverbs in -ly are formed from words ending in -l or -ll the ending should always be -lly, and words ending in -n retain it when adding -ness, e g *beautiful*, -fully, *full*, *fully*, *thin*, *thinness*, *solemn*, *solemnness*

Words ending with a single e generally drop it when taking a suffix beginning with a vowel, and retain it when the suffix begins with a consonant, e g *parachute*, *parachuting*, *crude*, *crudeness* There are, however, a number of exceptions *Singe* makes *singeing* to distinguish it from *singing*, *notice* makes *noticeable* to preserve the s sound, *gauge* makes *gaugeable* to preserve the j sound, and *whole* makes *wholly* to avoid the double l sound (though both the O E D and Fowler recommend that sound in *dully*) Other exceptions are that words ending in -ie take y before -ing (but *hue* makes *hueing*), and that words ending in -ee, -oe or -ye keep the final e before -ing, e g *die*, *dying*, *flee*, *fleeing*, *shoe*, *shoeing*, *eye*, *eyeing*, *dye*, *dyeing*

Words ending with y after a consonant change the y into i before a suffix beginning with any letter except i, those ending with y after a vowel usually retain the y, e g *carry*, *carried*, but *carrying*, *employ*, *employing* Exceptions are *repay*, *repaid*, *say*, *said*

IV Confusion sometimes arises between the uninflected (that is, the basic) forms of verbs ending in *l* and *ll*. Fowler states it as a rough working rule that if the preceding vowel is an *-a-* two *l*'s are necessary, and gives as examples *enthrall*, *appall*, *befall*, *install*, but of these only *befall* and *install* always follow the rule, *enthrall* sometimes and *appal* always (according to Fowler himself in the Concise Oxford Dictionary) being spelt with one *l*. If the preceding vowel is other than *-a-*, a single *l* is usual in verbs of more than one syllable, e.g., *annul*, *distil*.

V All- and -full. These usually drop an *l* when used to form compound words, as *already*, *almost*, *hopeful*, *plentiful*. But *alright* is still regarded as a vulgarism: use *all right*. Note the difference between *altogether* and *all together*. *No man is altogether evil, they were all together in one place*.

VI The plural of -ful. The correct form is *spoonfuls*, *basketfuls*, and in certain contexts *spoons full* and *baskets full* (*He took six spoons full of sugar. He brought six baskets full of apples*) but never *spoonsful*, *basketsful*.

VII Plural of nouns in -y and -ey. The *y* is changed into -ies and the -ey becomes -eys, e.g. *pony*, *ponies*, *storey*, *storeys*. Note, however, that there is an interesting difference of opinion over the spelling of *storey*, and also over the

origin of the word Wyld and Nuttall think it comes from an old French verb meaning *to build*. The O E D, Webster and Fowler prefer the theory (mentioned by Wyld with a "perhaps") that it is derived from the same root as *story*, a tale, and that it originally meant a tier of painted windows, paintings, or sculptures, which told a story. The Oxford *Authors' and Printers' Dictionary* totally rejects the spelling *storey*, and recommends *story* and *stories*, the O E D and Webster admit *storey*, and are powerfully supported by Fowler on the ground that there is "an obvious convenience in the two spellings. It is, for instance, well to know *storied windows* (illustrated Biblical or other stories) from *storeyed windows* (divided by transoms into storeys)." The spelling *storey* is on that account recommended here.

VIII Plural of nouns in -o Here again it is impossible to frame a rule covering all instances. General guidance only can be given. Words in -o, like words in -us, have usually a foreign flavour, and when that flavour is strong, as in *inferno*, *ghetto*, *crescendo*, *albino*, *commando*, *punctilio*, *duo-decimo*, *bravado*, *ditto*, the invariable rule is to add s only. The same rule applies, largely for the same reason, and partly to avoid the ugly look of three consecutive vowels, when the o is preceded by another vowel, as in

embryo, folio, cameo, also in such abbreviations as *photo, piano, stylo, dynamo, magneto*, in long words such as *archipelago, manifesto, generalissimo* (again because they have an alien sound), and in proper names such as *Romeo, Lothario*. But monosyllables such as *no, go* (used as nouns, as in *The Noes have it* and *He had three goes at it*) and thoroughly Englished words like *hero, potato, cargo*, and *domino*, almost always take *-es*. *Calico* is a border-line case, but as usage tends to choose *calicoes* that form is here recommended.

IX When to use *-ed* and *-’d*. An ugly choice sometimes arises when one wishes to make adjectives by adding *-ed* to nouns ending in one or more vowels. Is one to write “a one-ideaed politician” or “a one-idea’d politician”? Fowler recommends the apostrophe in all cases, but it is possible to draw up a workable rule without going quite so far as that. *Long-pedigreed families* (one of his own examples) gives no offence to the eye, neither does *haloed*, over the acceptability of which he seems to have had doubts. On the other hand *full-aromad* (or *aromaed*) *coffee* and *the wistariad* (or *wistariaed*) *walls* are clearly impossible: the unfamiliar look of the words offends the eye and momentarily destroys the sense. The suggested rule, therefore, is that an apostrophe should be used where the addition of *-ed* hurts the eye, does violence to the sense.

or threatens the pronunciation—that is, generally speaking, to words ending in a compound-vowel sound Words ending in a single-vowel sound will usually take -d (if the vowels are *ee*) or -ed (if they are not) without ambiguity

X Diphthongs Usage, tending as it does to smooth out awkward forms of spelling, long ago declared war on diphthongs every day we spell words with an *e* that were for long spelt *æ* or *œ* (e g *ether* for *æther*, *phenomenon* for *phænomenon*) and think nothing of it. Diphthongs are neither easy to read nor convenient to write, and no longer serve any useful purpose in English Where they can be dropped altogether, therefore—as in such partly-established spellings as *medieval* and *ecumenical*—they should be, and -e- substituted Even *homeopathy*, it may be suggested, is preferable to the clumsy *homoeopathy* (without the ligature), although the dictionaries give it no support But such words as *diarrhoea* and *gynaecology*, where the reducing process is not yet complete, and *manoeuvre*, in which it is necessary to keep the *oo* sound, should be written as here printed, without the ligature Less naturalized French importations such as *coup d'œil* and *chef d'œuvre*, however, are beyond the reach of the rationalizing process, and cannot safely be touched

XI For- or fore-. Confusion in the use of these

prefixes (e g of *forego*, to go before, as a substitute for *forgo*, to go without) is common and not unnatural, for the first of them was formerly used to express many different meanings, and was much more commonly used than it is now. The O E D lists the following meanings of *for*- forward, forth, away, off (as in *forcast*), prohibition or exclusion (as in *forbid*), renounce (*forsay*), abstaining from (*forbear*, *forgo*), destructive or prejudicial effect (*fordeem*, *fordo*), distract (*forhale*), done in excess (*forfrighted*), to exhaust (*forwarder*), all over, through and through (as in *forscratch*). It was also used to intensify the meaning of certain other verbs and adjectives, and as a prefix to words adopted from the French. *Fore*-, however, has always been associated with the idea of priority in time, order, position or rank. (*Foreclose*, meaning literally *to shut outside*, appears to be an exception only because the *fore*- is not strictly English, but comes from the Latin *foris*, meaning *outside*). Comparatively few *for*- words have survived, but among those in common use are *forbear* (verb), *forbid*, *forby* (Scotch), *forfeit*, *forfend*, *forgather*, *forget*, *forgive*, *forgo*, *forlorn*, *forsake*, *forsooth*, *forswear*. All words containing the idea "in front of," e g *forebear* (ancestor), *forehead*, *forearm*, should take an e—except *forward*. *Forbear*, however, is the spelling recommended by

many dictionaries, including the C O D , though that spelling obscures the etymology, *fore* (= before, in front of) *be-er*

XII In- or un-? English usage is nowhere more capricious than in forming negatives with in- and un- The first is the Latin form and the second the English, and all would be well if each kept to its own side of the fence But there are many exceptions, sometimes even two forms of the same word are differently prefixed (e g *undigested*, but *indigestible*, *undistinguished*, but *indistinguishable*) According to the O E D , the modern tendency is "to restrict in- to words obviously answering to Latin types, and to prefer the Old English un- in other cases," but as such a generalization is too vague for everyday use, a short list of doubtful words is given to supplement it

Words that take in-

adaptability	consolable	flexible
admissible	constant	gratitude
applicable	controvertible	hospitable
appreciable	disputable	opportune
appropriate	distinct	quietude
cautious	distinguishable	sanitary
certitude	effaceable	soluble
civility	efficient	supportable
conceivable	eradicable	surmountable
consequent	escapable	susceptible
considerable	explicable	

Words that take un-

acceptable	decipherable	obtrusive
adaptable	deniable	practical
alterable	discriminating	pronounceable
apparent	escapable	quenchable
appeasable	essential	quotable
authentic	exceptionable	responsive
charitable	expressive	scientific
communicative	expurgated	sociable
congenial	grammatical	substantial
considered	objectionable	substantiated
controllable	obliging	verifiable
controverted	observance	wholesome
corrupted		

Note that some words take either *in-* or *un-* to express different shades of meaning, e.g. *inartistic* means "contrary to the rules of art," while *unartistic* means "not concerned with the rules of art." There is a similar distinction between *immoral* (having bad morals) and *unmoral* (not troubled by moral considerations), *inartificial* (unskilful) and *unartificial* (natural).

XIII *Em-, en-, im-, and in-*. Since the fourteenth century, says the OED, these prefixes have been so much shuffled and reshuffled that it is now difficult to tell whether their origin in many words is French, Latin, or English. The OED recommends the following spellings *embed*, *encase*, *encrust*, *endorse*, *enmesh*, *ensure*, (*insure* in the financial sense), *entrust*, *incrustation*,

indorsation, ingrain, inquire, inquiry, inure It objects to *enquire* and *enquiry* on the ground that on account of their e they are only "half-latinized"

XIV To make adjectives in -y and -ey When one is called on to make an adjective out of a word like *plague* the need for this section becomes apparent Should it be *plaguey* or *plaguy*? The second form is right, and it may serve as a reminder that a mute e at the end of a word is usually dropped when it is necessary to add y, e g *mousy, nosy, stagy* It is retained, however, when the word ends in ue and the ue is not mute, and an e is inserted when the word already ends in y (e g *bluey, clayey*)

XV -In or -ine? The first is used, according to the O E D, "for the names of neutral substances, such as glycerides, glucosides, bitter principles, colouring matters, which are thus distinguished from names of alkaloids and basic substances in -ine Some of these were formerly spelt with -ine, especially *dextrine, gelatine, margarine*, and are still so spelt in non-scientific use" The distinction is quoted merely to show that one exists non-scientific people should go on writing *margarine*, etc

XVI Words in -or and -our. Most of us feel a twinge of irritation when we see such words as *humour* and *flavour* Americanized into *humor* and *flavor*, but we forget not only that the Americans are more consistent than we are (for we accept

horror and other -or words without a *tremor* of annoyance), but also that three centuries ago we tried the Americanizing process ourselves and made a bad job of it. After the year 1300, according to the O E D, the Latin o sound was regularly represented in English by ou. "At the Renaissance many of the -our words were conformed to the Latin in -or and nearly all words taken then or later from the Latin were spelt -or. In Great Britain -our is still written in many of the words left unchanged in the sixteenth century." Fowler, having pointed out that such words as *clamour*, *humour*, and *odour* make *clamorous*, *humorous*, and *odorous*, tries to restore order by suggesting that derivatives in -ist, -ite and -able, being regarded as formed directly from the English words, should retain the u (e g *humourist*), while derivatives in -ation and -ize are best treated, like those in -ous, as formed first in Latin, and so spelt without the u (e g *coloration*, *vaporize*). The spelling *humorist*, however, has prevailed in Modern English.

XVII Ante- and anti- The first means *before*, the second *opposite* or *against*. Care should therefore be taken not to get the meanings mixed. Thus an *antimacassar* was originally a covering thrown over a chair to protect it from the macassar oil then largely used as a hair dressing, *antediluvian* means literally "before the flood."

XVIII -ic or -ick-? Verbs in -c like *frolic*, *picnic*, and *bivouac* take k before -ed, -ing, -er, in order to retain the hard sound of the consonant, e g *picnicker*

XIX Judgement or judgment? This is another problem from no-man's-land. Common usage, and most dictionaries, plump for *judgment*, *acknowledgment*, and so on. "John o' London" prefers *judgment* because (1) the -e- is not here required to soften the -g-, which (he contends) no one would attempt to pronounce hard, (2) because *judgment* is a word of first-class importance and, thus spelt, looks more self-existent than *judge-ment*. Fowler, on the other hand, stands out for *judgement* on the grounds that it is "the older and more reasonable spelling," that it is used in the Bible, and that it accords with the rule, mentioned above, that the mute -e- in derivatives should be dropped only before vowels. He is supported by the OED, and in this instance I think he is right in opposing modern usage. A rule should not be broken in cold blood unless there is something to be gained by breaking it. Here there is no gain, but rather a loss of clarity. In my view the -e- is needed to ensure the softness of the -g-, and to break up the ugly association of the three consonants. The position is complicated, as Fowler reminds us, by the fact that the -e- is dropped in such proper names

as Sidgwick, Rudgwick, and Edgcumbe But proper names are above legislation, and should not be allowed to corrupt good manners The reader must decide for himself, but in all such words he is recommended to use the -e-

XX -ction or -xion? Although the O E D endorses the spellings *connexion*, *deflexion*, *inflexion*, and *reflexion* as etymologically correct, there has been a decided movement away from them in the last fifty years Fowler accepts *reflection*, but prefers the -xion form in the others So do Wyld, Nuttall, and the *Authors' and Printers' Dictionary* Webster, however, adopts the -ction forms, and in doing so is, I believe, more abreast of common usage than the other authorities If *reflection* passes muster it seems unreasonable to condemn *connection*, and because this form is steadily gaining ground, in defiance of the etymologists, it is recommended in the list that follows these rules

XXI -able or -ible? These adjectival suffixes are a constant source of confusion It is impossible to lay down a general rule for their use, but the following lists contain most of the words over which difficulty usually arises

Words that take -able

acceptable	approachable	breakable
accountable	believable	bridgeable
agreeable	blameable	chargeable

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commendable	limitable	refutable
companionable	lovable	reputable
conformable	manageable	respectable
conversable	marriageable	retrievable
debatable	movable	returnable
demonstrable	noticeable	saleable
describable	palatable	seasonable
dispensable	passable	serviceable
distinguishable	peaceable	traceable
excitable	penetrable	translatable
excusable	perishable	transportable
execrable	persuadable	transposable
governable	perturbable	unconscionable
impregnable	presumable	unmistakable
impressionable	printable	unspeakable
indefatigable	pronounceable	vulnerable
insuperable	quotable	washable
irrefragable	reconcilable	workable
irreparable	recoverable	
lamentable	redeemable	

Words that take -ible

accessible	convertible	expressible
addible	corruptible	fallible
adducible	credible	feasible
admissible	deducible	flexible
audible	defensible	incorrigible
collapsible	destructible	intelligible
combustible	digestible	invincible
compatible	discernible	irascible
comprehensible	divisible	legible
conducible	eligible	miscible
contemptible	exhaustible	negligible
controvertible	expansible	ostensible

perceptible	responsible	susceptible
permissible	reversible	tangible
plausible	risible	visible
reducible	sensible	
resistible	submersible	

XXII -ly and -ally It is a common error to confuse these word endings, e.g. to write *incidentally* for *incidentally*, *accidentally* for *accidentally*, *experimentally* for *experimentally*, and *adjectively* for *adjectivally*. The difficulty of remembering which is the correct form can be removed by a moment's thought. All these words are adverbs, formed not directly from nouns, but from adjectives derived from those nouns. Thus *accident* is a noun, *accidental* the corresponding adjective, and *accidental-ly* the adverb formed from the adjective. Probably the confusion in the unpractised writer's mind is caused by such words as *subjectively* and *objectively*. But *subjective* and *objective* are adjectives to begin with, and so merely require the addition of *-ly* to turn them into adverbs.

Commonly Misspelt Words

The following list of commonly misspelt words has been compiled from many sources, but chiefly from newspapers, letters, and manuscripts that have come under my own notice. While it includes a number of words that will be found in any dictionary it also includes many proper

SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

nouns, plurals, and inflections which dictionaries do not usually give, and it is in these that I hope its chief usefulness will lie. Some words have more than one accepted spelling. In deciding between them I have been guided by the forms preferred by the *Shorter Oxford*, *Concise Oxford*, and *Wyld's Universal English* dictionaries, and by the *Authors' and Printers' Dictionary*.

Abatable, abating
 abbatoir
 abbot
 abbreviate, abbreviator
 abdicator
 abductor
 aberration
 Aberystwyth
 abetter (*in law* abettor)
 abridgement
 abscess, *pl* abscesses
 absence
 absinth
 abstemious, abstinence
 abundance
 abutment
 abysmal, abyss
 accedence (assent), *dist*
 from accedence (part
 of grammar dealing
 with inflections)
 accelerate, acceleration,
 accelerator

accessary (applied to
 persons), accessory
 (applied to things)
 acciaccatura
 accidentally
 acclimatize, acclimatiza-
 tion
 accommodate
 accompanist
 accordion
 accouchement
 accrue
 acetic (acid), *dist* *from*
 ascetic (austere)
 achievable, achievement
 acknowledgement
 acoustic
 acquaint, acquaintance
 acquiesce, acquiescence
 acquire, acquirement
 acquitted, acquittal
 actuary
 addible
 addorsed
 addressee

GOOD AND BAD ENGLISH

adducible	aggrieve
adieu, <i>pl</i> adieux	agitator
adjectivally (<i>not</i> adjectively)	agreeable, agreeableness, agreeability
adjudgement	agriculturist
adjudicator	aileron
adjunct	aircraftman
admissible, admissibility	ajar
adsorb (condensation)	a-kimbo
adulatory	Aladdin
advanceable, advance- ment	albatross
adventitious	Albemarle
advertise, -ment	albinos, <i>pl</i> of albino
advisable, advising, ad- visory	albumen, <i>dist from</i> al- bumin, <i>its chief con-</i> <i>stituent</i>
æolian	albuminose, albuminous
æon	Alderney
aerial	alfresco
aeroplane	alibi, <i>pl</i> alibis
aerostatic	aliment, alimentary
aesthete, aesthetic	allegeable, alleging
affiliation	alligator
affright	alliteration, alliterative
Afghan	allocation
ageing	allopathy, allopathist
agglomerate, agglomera- tion	allot, allottable, allot- ment
aggrandize, aggrandize- ment	allotted, allotting
aggravate, aggravation	all right (<i>not</i> alright)
aggregate, aggregation	almanac (but <i>Whitaker's</i> <i>Almanack</i>)
aggression, aggressive, aggressor	aluminium

SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

amanuenses, <i>pl</i> of	antepenultimate
amanuensis	ante-room
ambidextrous	antimacassar
amiable	antimony
amorphous	antirrhinum
amortize, amortization	antiseptic
ampere, amperage (<i>no accent</i>)	à outrance (not à l'ou-trance)
ampersand	Apennine
amphibious	aping, apish
amuck	Apocalypse
amusing	Apollo
anæmia	apophthegm
anæsthesia, anæsthetic,	apoplectic
anæsthetize	apostasy
analogous	apostrophe
analyse, analytic	appal, appalling, ap-palled
anarchical	apparatuses
ancillary	apparel, apparelled
Anglesey	apparent
aniline	appellant
animalcule, <i>pl</i> -ules	apportion
ankle	apposite, <i>dist from</i> op-posite
annotator	appropriate
annul, annulment, an-nulled	appurtenance
anoint	aquarium, <i>pl</i> aquariums
anomalous	aqueduct
anonymity, anonymous	aqueous
Antarctic (<i>noun</i>), ant-arctic (<i>adj</i>)	aquiline
antecedent	archetype
antediluvian	archidiaconal
antemeridian	

archipelago, *pl* archi-
 pelagos
 archivist
 Arctic(*noun*), arctic(*adj*)
 Aristotelean
 armadillos, *pl* of arma-
 dillo
 asafœtida
 ascendance, ascendancy
 ascendant (*noun and ad-
 jective*)
 ascertain
 ascetic (austere), *dist*
from acetic (vinegary)
 asparagus
 asphalt
 assagai
 assassin
 assess, assessable
 assessor
 assimilate
 assurer
 asthma, asthmatic
 attitudinize, attitudinizer
 attractability
 augur (soothsayer), *dist*
from auger (a tool)
 aurora borealis, *pl*
 auroræ boreales
 author, authoress, au-
 thority
 autochthon, autoch-
 thonous
 auxiliary

avertible
 avoirdupois
 awesome
 awful, awfully
 ayah

Bacchus, bacchanalian
 bagatelle
 Baghdad
 baksheesh
 balanceable
 balloted, balloting
 balustrade
 bandanna
 bandoleer
 banister
 banjo, *pl* banjoes
 banqueting, banqueted
 baptistery
 Barbados
 barcarole
 baritone
 barmecide
 barrel, barrelled
 bassinet
 bastinados, *pl* of bastin-
 ado
 battalion
 bayonet, bayoneted,
 bayoneting
 beatitude
 beauteous
 bêche-de-mer

SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

Becket, Thomas (<i>not à</i> Becket)	bizarre
bedouin, <i>pl -s</i>	blameable, blaming
believable	blancmange
belvedere	blueing, bluish
benefice, beneficence, beneficent, beneficial, benefited, benefiting	blunderbuss
benzene (spirit distilled from coal-gas), ben- zine (spirit obtained from petroleum)	bogy (ghost), bogey (golf), bogie (truck)
bequeath	Boniface
better (one who bets)	bonus, <i>pl -es</i>
bevelling, bevelled	boule (<i>not buhl</i>)
beverage	bourgeois, bourgeoisie
biannual (twice a year), <i>dist from</i> biennial (every two years)	boycott
biassing, biased	braggadocio
biceps	brassy (golf-club)
bicycle	bravadoes, <i>pl of</i> bravado
bilberry	bravoes (desperadoes), <i>pl of</i> bravo
bilious	breviary
billiards, but billiard- ball, -cue, -marker, etc	briable, bribing
bimetallism	Britain
bimillenary	Britannia
binnacle (compass-stand)	Brittany
binocle (field-glass)	Brobdingnag, Brob- dingnagian
binocular	brochure
bituminous	broccoli
bivouacked, bivouacking	bronco (horse)
	bucolic
	Buddha, Buddhism, Buddhist
	budgerigar
	buffaloes, <i>pl of</i> buffalo
	bulldog
	bullfinch

GOOD AND BAD ENGLISH

bulrush
bulwark
bunion
bureaucracy, bureaucrat
buses
by and by, by-election,
bygone, by-law, by-name,
by-pass, by-path, by-play,
by-product, by-road, by the
bye, by-way, byword
bye (in cricket)
bye-bye

Cabbala
cachinnation, cachinnatory
cadaver, cadaverous
caddie (golf), caddy (tea)
caffeine
calamity
calendar (almanac), *dist*
from calender (to smooth)
and colander (cooking-strainer)
calibre
calicoes, *pl of* calico
calligraphy
callisthenics
caloric, calorescence
calyx, *pl* calyces
camaraderie
camellia
camelopard

cannonade
canonical
canvas (cloth), *dist from*
canvass (solicit)
caoutchouc
capercailzie (usual, but
capercaillie is phonetically
more accurate, and is recommended
by the O E D)
capful, *pl* capfuls
carabinier
carburetted, carburetter
carcass
caress
caret (the sign ^), *dist*
from carat (a weight)
cargoes
Carmarthen
Carnarvon
carol, carolled, caroller
carpeting, carpeted
Caribbean Sea
caryatid, *pl* caryatides
casein
casinos, *pl of* casino
Cassiopeia
cassowary
caste (class), *dist from*
cast (throw, or of a play)
castellated
casualty (*not* casualty)
cataloguing

SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

catarrh, catarrhal	chrysalis, <i>pl</i> chrysalises,
catechism	chrysalid (adj)
catechize, catechizer	chrysanthemum
caterpillar	cider
caterwaul	Cincinnati
cat's-paw	cinnabar
cauliflower	cinnamon
caviar	cipher
celery	cirrus (cloud)
cemetery	clairvoyance, -ant
centenary, centennial	clangor
centring, centred	clarinet, clarinettist
centripetal	clayey
chalybeate	clef
chameleon	clientele
chandelier	clique, cliquish,
changeable, changeabil-	cliquism, cliquy
ity, changing, change-	cloisonné
ling	clubbable
chargé d'affaires	cochineal
chauffeur	cockerel (<i>not</i> ell)
chiaroscuro	coco-nut
chicory	colander
chilblain	collaborator
chimneys, <i>pl</i> of chimney	collapsible
chirrup	colloquial
chock-full	colloquy
choky	colonnade
chord (mus and geom	colossal
term), <i>dist</i> from cord	Colosseum (Rome),
(rope) <i>and</i> vocal	Coliseum (London
cords)	theatre)
choruses, <i>pl</i> of chorus	combating, combated,
	combative

combustible	corollary
commemorate	corroborate
commingle	corroboree
commiserate	coruscate, coruscation
commissary	courageous
committed, committing,	crèche
committal	crenellate(battlemented),
committee	<i>dist from</i> crenulate
commonalty	(notched or scalloped)
commonest, common-	creosote
ness	cretaceous
communal	courtesy
complement (that which	crochet (knitting)
completes), <i>dist from</i>	crotchet (music)
compliment (flattery)	crocus
component	cruellest
concomitant	crustaceous
condign, -ness	crystalline
confectionery	cupfuls, <i>pl</i> of cupful
confessor	curtsy, curtsying
confidence	cyclopaedia
conjuror (juggler), con-	Cymmrodorion
juror (person bound	
by oath)	D achshund
connection	dactylic
connoisseur	dados, <i>pl</i> of dado
conscientious	daguerreotype
consolable	daises, <i>pl</i> of dais
consummate	damageable
contagion, contagious	dandelion
contemporaneous	Dandie Dinmont
contractual	Dantesque
contraltos, <i>pl</i> of contralto	datable, dative
coracle	debatable, debating

SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

débutant (male or female performer making first appearance), débute (girl presented at court)	desperadoes, <i>pl of</i> desperado
decadence	despite
decasyllabic	detering, deterred, deterrent
deceased (dead), <i>dist from</i> diseased (ill)	develop, developing, developed
deciduous	diablerie
décolleté, <i>fem</i> décolletée	diaeresis
defaceable	diarrhoea
defendant, defensible	dilapidated
definable, definite, definitely, definitive	dilating, dilatable
deflection	diligence
deified	dinghy
deleterious	dingoes, <i>pl of</i> dingo
demesne	diphtheria
demoniacal, demonology	diphthong
demonitize	diptych
demonstrable	dirigible
demurrage, demurring	disagreeable
denominator	disappear
deodorize, -ization, -izer	disappoint
dependable	discernible
dependence, dependent, dependency	discourteous
de rigueur	dislodgement
derogatory	dismissible
descendant (noun), <i>dist from</i> descendent (adj)	disparagement
desiccate	dispensable
	dispiteous
	displaceable
	dissimilar
	dissipate
	dissociate
	distich

divisible	eighth, eightieth
divorceable	eisteddfod, <i>pl</i> eistedd-
doggerel	fodau
dogma, <i>pl</i> dogmas	eleemosynary
doily (<i>not</i> doyley or d'oyley)	elegiac
dolorous, dolour	eligible
dominoes, <i>pl</i> of domino	elision
dotage, dotard	ellipsis, <i>pl</i> ellipses
double entente (<i>not</i> en- tendre)	Elysium
drachmas, <i>pl</i> of drach- ma	emaciated
dragomans, <i>pl</i> of drago- man	embargoes, <i>pl</i> of em- bargo
drivelling, driveller	embarrass, embarrassing
dullness	embed
duly	embraceable
dynamos, <i>pl</i> of dynamo	embryos, <i>pl</i> of embryo
dysentery	emigrate <i>dist</i> from im- migrate
E bullient	emissary
ecclesiastical	empanel
echelon	en déshabillé (<i>not</i> -ille)
echoes, <i>pl</i> of echo	enamelling, enamelled, enameller
eclogue	encage
ecstasy	encase
eczema	enclose
edelweiss	encrust (<i>but</i> incrusta- tion)
edgeways	Encyclopaedia Britan- nica
edging	endorse, endorsement
effervescence	enema, <i>pl</i> enemas
effluvium, <i>pl</i> effluvia	enfold
effrontery	enforceable

SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

enmesh	Euphrosyne
enrolling, enrolled, enrollment	euphuistic
ensconce	evenness
ensuing	eviscerate
ensure (to make safe)	exacerbation
See insure	exaggerate, exaggeration
enthralment	exceed (go beyond), <i>dist. from</i> accede (assent)
entr'acte, <i>pl</i> entr'actes	excellences, <i>pl</i> of excellence, <i>dist from</i> excellencies (title)
entrust	exchangeable
entwine	exciting, excitable
envelop (<i>vb</i>), <i>dist from</i> envelope (noun), enveloped, enveloping, envelopment	excrescence
enwrap	executrices, <i>pl</i> of executrix
epithalamia, <i>pl</i> of epithalamium	exercise (practice), <i>dist from</i> exorcize (drive away)
erasable, erasure	exhale, exhalation
erroneous	exhaust, exhaustion
erysipelas	exhibitor
escapable	exhilarate, exhilaration
eschschoitzia	exhort, exhortation
escutcheon	exhume, exhumation
Eskimo, <i>pl</i> Eskimos	exiguity
estrangement	exonerate
etymology	exorbitant (<i>not</i> exhor-)
eucharist	exotic
eulogize	expense, expensive
euphemism (use of pleasant words for unpleasant ideas), <i>dist from</i> euphuism (high-flown style)	extempore, extemporaneous, extemporize
	extensible

extirpator
extraordinary, extra-
ordinarily

Facetious
facsimiles, *pl of fac-*
simile

Fahrenheit

fakable

fallible, fallibility

fanfaronade

farinaceous

farrago

fascinate

fauteuil

fiascos, *pl of fiasco*

fidgeting, fidgeted, fid-
gety

filleting, filleted

fillip

finable, fining

finical

finicking

flaccid, flaccidity

flagellant

flageolet

flagitious

flamboyant

flaming

flamingos, *pl of flam-*
ingo

flannelette

flannelled

flavour

fledgeling

flexible

florescence

flotsam and jetsam

fluky

fluty

fo'c'sle

foci, *pl of focus*

focusing, focused

foliaceous

folios, *pl of folio*

Fontainebleau

forbade, forbid

forbear (verb), forebears
(ancestors)

forceps (*both sing and*
pl)

foreboding

foreclose

foreman

forewarn

forfeit

forgather

forging

forgettable, forgiving,
forgivable

forgo, forgone (go with-
out), *dist from* forego,
foregone (go before)

forlorn

forsake

forswear

fortieth, forty

fossiliferous, fossilize
 foully
 framing, framable
 francs-tireurs, *pl of*
 franc-tireur
 frangipane
 frankincense
 freezable
 fritillary
 frolicking, frolicked,
 frolicsome
 frumenty
 fuchsia
 fugue
 fulfil, fulfilling, ful-
 filled, fulfilment
 fullness
 fulsome
 fumigator
 fungus, *pl fungi (pron*
 fun-jy)
 furze
 fusible
 fusilier
 fusillade

Gaity, gaily

galaxy

Galilean

Galileo

gallimaufry

gallivant

galloping, galloped, gal-
 loper

gambolling, gambolled

ganglia, *pl of ganglion*

gaol (*use jail*)

garish, garishness

gaseous, gases, gassy

gasolene

gastric

gastronomic

gaudiness, gaudily

gauge

gaugeable, gauging

gawkiness, gawky

gelatinous

genius, *pl geniuses (but*
 geni=spirits)

genuflexion

germane

get-at-able

geyser

ghastly

gherkin

ghetto, *pl ghettos*

ghoul

gibbous, gibbosity

gillie (*not ghillie*)

gingham

gladiolus, *pl gladioli*

glamorous

glaring

glassful, *pl glassfuls*

glaucous

glucose

gluey, gluing

glutinous

glycerine
 gnome
 gormandize
 gouache
 gourmand (glutton), *dist*
from gourmet (epicure)
 grammar
 gramophone
 granary
 grandeur
 greediness
 grievance, grievous
 grimace
 grottoes, *pl of* grotto
 gruesome
 guarantor
 guerrilla (a kind of war-
 fare), *dist from* gorilla
 guiding, guidance
 guillemot
 guillotine
 guiltily, guiltiness
 gullible, gullibility
 Gurkha
 guttural
 gymkhana
 gymnasium, *pl* gym-
 nasiums
 gynaecology
 gypsum
 gypsy
 gyrate, gyration, gyro-
 scope

Habiliment
 haemorrhage, haemo-
 rrhoids
 halcyon
 half-caste
 halibut
 halo, *pl* haloes
 hamadryad, *pl* hama-
 dryads
 handfuls, *pl of* handful
 handiwork
 handkerchief
 hangar (shed), *dist from*
 hanger (that which
 hangs)
 hara-kiri
 harangue
 harass
 hardihood
 hare-brained
 harpsichord
 harpy
 hashish
 hastiness
 haughtiness
 Hawaii, Hawaiian
 haziness
 headachy
 healthily, healthiness
 hedgehog
 heifer
 height
 heighten

SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

heinous	hoping
hellebore	horehound
Heracleian	hornblende
herbaceous	horologe
herbiferous	horoscope
hereditary	horrible
heroes, <i>pl of hero</i>	hors-d'œuvre
heronry	horsy
heterogeneous, hetero- geneity	hosanna
hiatuses, <i>pl of hiatus</i>	hospitaller
hiccup	Houyhnhnm
hidalgoes, <i>pl of hidalgo</i>	howitzer
hideous	huge
hieing	Huguenot
high-falutin	hullabaloo
hinging	humorist, humorous
hireable, hireling	hundredth
hiring	hurdy-gurdy
hirsute	hurly-burly
histrionic	hyacinth
hocus-pocus	hydrangea
hoeing	hygiene
holocaust	hyperbola (curve), <i>dist</i> <i>from hyperbole (exag-</i> <i>geration)</i>
homeliness	hypercritical (over- critical), <i>dist from</i>
homoeopath	hypocritical (practis- ing hypocrisy)
homily	hypochondria, hypo- chondriacal
homogeneous, homo- geneity	hypocrisy
honey, honeyed, honeys	hypotenuse
honorarium	
honorary	
honorific	
hoopoe	

hypotheses, *pl of hypothesis*

Ibexes, *pl of ibex*
 ichneumon
 ichthyosaurus
 icicle, iciness, icing
 idiosyncrasy
 imbroglio
 immanent (inherent),
dist from imminent
 (impending) *and*
 eminent (distinguished)
 immeasurable
 immensely
 immobile, immobility
 immovable
 impartial
 impassable (not to be
 passed), *dist from im-*
passible (insensible)
 impeccable
 impediment
 imperilling, imperilled
 implacable
 impostor
 impresario, *pl impres-*
arios
 impromptu, *pl im-*
promptus
 impugnable
 impunity
 inadvertence

inaugurate
 incessant
 inchoate
 incidentally (*not*
incidently)
 inciting, incitation
 incomparable
 inconceivable
 incongruous
 inconsistent, *inconsist-*
ency
 incontestable
 incorporeal
 incrustation
 incumbency
 incurable
 indeclinable
 indefatigable
 indefensible
 indefinite, indefinable,
 indefinitely
 indelible
 independent, independ-
 ence
 index, *pl indexes (in*
mathematics indices)
 indictment
 indigenous
 indigestible
 indispensable
 indivisible
 indubitable
 ineffaceable
 inexhaustible

SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

inexpressible
 inexpugnable
 infallible
 infernos, *pl of* inferno
 infinitesimal
 infinitive
 inflammation, inflam-
 matory, inflammable
 inflatable
 inflection
 inflexible
 influential
 ingenious (clever), *dist*
 from ingenuous (inno-
 cent)
 ingrain
 inhalation
 inheritor
 inimical
 initialing, initialed
 innocuous
 innovation
 innuendos, *pl of* in-
 nuendo
 inoculate
 inquire, inquiry
 insolvent, insolvency
 insouciant, insouciance
 install
 instalment
 instanter
 instructor
 insular

insure (to secure the
 payment of money in
 certain contingencies)
 See ensure
 insurrection
 integer
 intelligible, intelligent
 intercede
 innuendo, *pl* innuendos
 intermezzo
 internecine
 interpellate (question),
 dist from interpolate
 (insert)
 interregnum
 interring, interred
 interrogate, interroga-
 tory
 interrupter
 interstice
 intransigent
 intriguing
 introductory
 inure
 inveigle
 inventor
 invisible
 ipecacuanha
 irascible
 iridescent
 irises, *pl of* iris
 iritis
 irreconcilable
 irrefragable

irreparable
 irreprovable
 irresistible
 irrevocable
 ir retrievable
 isosceles
 issuing
 isthmus, *pl* isthmuses
 itinerary
 ivied
 ivory

Jamb
 jeopardous
 Jephthah
 Jeremiad
 Jeroboam
 jetsam
 jewelled, jeweller, jewel-
 lery
 jingoes, *pl* of jingo
 jockeys, *pl* of jockey
 jocose
 jocund
 journeys, *pl* of journey
 judgement
 jugglery
 juiciness
 justiciary
 juvenescence
 juxtaposition

Kaleidoscope
 kedgeriee

keenness
 kennel
 kernel
 kernelled
 khaki
 kidneys, *pl* of kidney
 kleptomania
 knobby, knobbiness
 knowable
 knowledgeable
 kudos

Laager (Boer encamp-
 ment), *dist* from lager
 (beer)
 labelling, labelled
 laborious, laboratory
 labyrinth, labyrinthine
 lachrymal, lachrymose
 lackadaisical
 lackey
 lacquer
 lacuna, *pl* lacunæ
 lagoon
 lama (Buddhist priest),
 dist from llama (animal)
 lamprey, *pl* lampreys
 languor, languorous
 lanolin
 lapidary
 lapis lazuli
 largess
 larrikin
 laryngitis

SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

larynx	Lillibullero
lassitude	Lilliputian
lassoing, lassoed	limbos, <i>pl of limbo</i>
lassos, <i>pl of lasso</i>	limitable
laudable	limn
laudatory	lineage (ancestry), <i>dist</i>
lavatory	<i>from</i> lineage (number
laziness	of printed lines)
legerdemain	lineament (feature), <i>dist.</i>
legitimize	<i>from</i> liniment (em-
leguminous	brocation)
leprechaun	lineal, linear
leprosy	linguistic
lese-majesty	lining
levee	linoleum
levelled, levelling,	liquefy, liquefiable,
leveller	liquefaction
liaison	liqueur
libelling, libelled, libel-	liquorice
lous	lissom
librarian	literal
licence (noun, a permit),	litigious
<i>dist from</i> license to	littoral
permit)	livable, livelihood
liege	llama (animal), <i>dist from</i>
lien	lama (Buddhist priest)
lieutenancy	Llandrindod Wells
lightening (growing	loath (adj, disliking),
lighter), <i>dist from</i>	<i>use</i> loth, <i>dist from</i>
lightning (electric dis-	loathe (to dislike)
charge)	loathing, loathsome
ligneous	locum-tenens, <i>pl</i> locum
likeable, liking	tenentes
likely, likeliest	lodestar, lodestone

lodging, lodgement
 loggia, *pl* loggias
 loneliness
 longevity
 loosestrife
 loquacious
 lorry
 losable
 loth (*see* loath)
 lousy
 lovable, loving
 luminary, luminosity
 luscious
 lustre
 lustrous

Macaroon

macassar
 Machiavellism
 machinery
 mackerel
 mackintosh
 macrocosm (the universe), *dist* from microcosm (miniature representation of)
 macroscopic (visible to the naked eye), *dist* from microscopic (visible only through a microscope)
 maelstrom
 magenta
 Magna Carta

magnesia, magnesium
 magnetos, *pl* of magneto
 magniloquence
 maharajah
 mahogany
 mahout
 maisonette
 majesty
 malachite
 malapropism
 malapropos (one word)
 malediction
 malefactor
 malleable
 maltster
 mameluke
 manacle
 manageable, management
 mandible
 mandolin
 mangosteen
 maniac, maniacal
 manifestos, *pl* of manifesto
 manikin
 manipulator
 mannequin
 manoeuvre, manoeuvring, manoeuvred
 mantelpiece, mantelshelf
 manufactory, manufacturer

SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

Maori, *pl* Maoris
 marabou (feather), *dist*
from marabout (a Mo-
 hammedan hermit)
 maraschino
 margarine
 mariage de convenance
 marketing, marketed
 marmalade
 marquetry
 marquess
 marriageable
 marshal, marshalling,
 marshalled, marshaller
 marvelled, marvellous
 mashie
 Massachusetts
 massacre, massacring
 massage, masseur (*fem*
masseuse)
 mastodon
 mayonnaise
 mazy
 meagrely, meagreness
 measuring, measurable
 medicine
 mediæval
 Mediterranean
 meerscham
 mellifluous, mellifluence
 mementoes, *pl* of me-
 mento
 menacing

mendacity (lying), *dist*
from mendicity (beg-
 ging)
 Mephistophelean
 Mercédès
 meridian, meridional
 meringue
 metalling, metallled,
 metallurgy
 meteorology (science of
 weather), *dist from*
 metrology (science of
 weights and measures)
 meter (measuring in-
 strument), *dist from*
 metre (rhythm)
 metric
 microcosm (*see* macro-
 cosm)
 milage
 millenary (1,000 years),
dist from* millinery
 (hats),
 millennial, millennium
 millepede
 millionaire
 mimicking, mimicked
 mineralogy
 miniature
 miniver
 minnesinger
 minstrel, minstrelsy
 miscellaneous
 mischievous

misfeasance	mosquito, <i>pl</i> mosquitoes
mismanagement	motto, <i>pl</i> mottoes
misogamy, -ist (hatred, hater of marriage), <i>dist from</i> misogyny, -ist (hatred, hater of women)	mouldiness
Mississippi	moustache
Missouri	mousy
misspelt	mouthful, <i>pl</i> mouthfuls
misstate	movable, movability
mistakable	mucilaginous
mitrailleuse	mucous
mizen, <i>not</i> mizzen (mast)	mulligatawny
mizzle	multiple
moccasin	multipliable, multiplier
modelling, modelled, modeller	municipal
Mohammed, Moham- medan	murmuring, murmured murmurer
moety	Mussulman, <i>pl</i> Mussul- mans
molecular	myopia
monastery	myrmidon
monetary	
moneyed	N arve, naivety
monies, <i>pl of</i> money	namable
mongooses, <i>pl of</i> mon- goose	naphtha, naphthalene
monkeys	narcissi, <i>pl of</i> narcissus
monocle	nasturtium, <i>pl</i> nastur- tiums
moral, moralize	naughtily, naughtiness
moreover	nausea, nauseate, nause- ous
mortgage, mortgagee, mortgagor	necessary, necessarily, necessity
	negligible
	Negroes, <i>pl of</i> Negro

SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

Nicene
nicety
niece
numbuses, *pl of nimbus*
nincompoop
noisome
nonesuch
noticeable
numerator
nuncios, *pl of nuncio*
nursery

Oasis, *pl oases*

Obadiah
obligato
obedient, obedience
obeisance
obese, obesity
obituary
obliging
obloquy
obnoxious
oboist
obscene
obsequies
obsequious
observatory
obsession
obsolete
obsolescent, obsoles-
cence
obstetrics
obstreperous

occipital
occurring, occurred, oc-
currence
ochre, ochreous
octavos, *pl of octavo*
octopuses, *pl of octopus*
odorous
odyssey
offence, offensive
offertory
oleaginous
olfactory
ominous
omission, omitted,
omitting
omnibuses, *pl of omni-
bus*
omniscient, omniscience
omnivorous
oneself
onomatopoeia, onomato-
poaic
ophthalmia
opossum
opponent
opportunist
opportunity
opposite
opprobrious
opprobrium
oppressor
orangeade
oratorios, *pl of oratorio*

ordinance (rule) *dist*
from ordnance (can-
 non)
 ordinary
 orgy, *pl* orgies
 orifice
 orthopaedic
 oscillate, oscillating,
 oscillatory
 ossified
 Ottomans, *pl of* Otto-
 man (a Turk)
 outrageous
 outrance (à, *not* à l'ou-
 trance)
 overrate, overreach,
 override, overrule,
 overrun
 owing

Pachydermatous
 pacificator
 paging, paginal, pagi-
 nation
 palæontology
 palatable
 palette
 palfrey
 palish
 palliasse
 panacea
 pandemonium
 papier-mâché

papyrus, *pl* papyri
 paradigm
 paraffin
 parakeet
 parallax
 parallel, paralleling,
 paralleled, parallelo-
 gram
 paralyse, paralysis
 paraphernalia
 paregoric
 parentheses, *pl of* paren-
 thesis
 paroxysm
 parquet, parquetry
 passable
 pâté de foie gras
 patronymic
 pavilion
 peaceable
 pebbly
 peccadilloes, *pl of* pec-
 cadillo
 pedalling, pedalled
 pedlar
 peewit
 pekoe
 Peloponnesian
 pemmican
 pencilling, pencilled
 pendant
 peninsula (noun), penin-
 sular (adj)
 penitentiary

SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

penniless
 Pentecost, pentecostal
 perambulator
 perceive, perceiving,
 percervable
 perceptible
 percolate, percolator
 peregrinate, peregrina-
 tion
 peremptory
 perennial
 perfecter, perfectible
 perforator
 perfunctory
 periphery
 periphrases, *pl of peri-*
 phrasis
 permeable
 permissible
 permitting, permitted
 perpendicular
 perquisite
 persistent, persistence
 personalty, *dist from*
 personality
 personnel
 persuade
 petroleum
 pettifogger
 petulance
 phalanges, *pl of phalanx*
 phantasmagoria
 pharmacopoeia
 pharynx, *pl pharynges*

phenomenon, *pl phen-*
 omena
 Philippine (Islands)
 philippic
 phlegm
 phosphorescence
 phosphorus (noun) *dist*
 from phosphorous (adj)
 phthisis, phthisic
 phyloxera
 physicist
 physiognomy, physiog-
 nomist
 physique
 pianoforte
 pianos, *pl of piano*
 Piccadilly
 piccalilly
 piccaninny
 piccolo
 picaresque
 picketing, picketed
 picnicked, picnicker
 pigsty, *pl -sties*
 piloting, piloted
 pilule
 pipefuls, *pl of pipeful*
 pitied, pitiful, pitiable,
 pitiless
 plague, plaguily, plaguy
 plainness
 plain-song
 plane-sailing

plateaux, <i>pl of</i> plateau	precedent
platefuls, <i>pl of</i> plateful	predacious
plausible	predecessor
playwright	predilection
pleasantry	preferable, preference
pleasurable	preferring, preferred
plebeian	prehensile
plebiscite	prejudicial
plethora	preliminary
pleurisy	premonitory
pliancy	prentice (<i>no apostrophe</i>)
poignancy	Presbyterian
polysyllabic	prescience
polypus, <i>pl</i> polypi	prescient
pomegranate	prestidigitator
pommelling, pommelled	prestige
porphyry	presumable, presuming,
portentous	presumption
portfolios, <i>pl of</i> portfolio	pretence, pretension
porticos, <i>pl of</i> portico,	preterite
porticoed	prettily, prettiness
portmanteaux, <i>pl of</i>	preventive
portmanteau	prie-dieu
Portuguese	prima donna, <i>pl</i> prime
possess, possession, pos-	donne
sessible, possessive,	prima facie
possessor	primeval
poste restante	principal (noun and adj
posthumous	= chief), principle
postilion	(noun = law, code of
potatoes, <i>pl of</i> potato	right conduct)
practice (noun), <i>dist</i>	prise (force open), <i>dist</i>
<i>from</i> practise (verb)	<i>from</i> prize (value)
	pristine

SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

privilege
 proboscis, *pl* probosces
 procedure
 procurator
 producible
 professor
 proffer
 profiting, profited, pro
 fiteer
 progenitor
 projector
 proletariat
 promiscuous
 promissory
 promontory
 pronounceable,
 pronouncement, pro-
 nouncing, pronuncia-
 tion
 propaganda
 propagator
 propelling, propelled,
 propeller
 propensity
 prophecy (noun), *dist*
 from prophesy (verb)
 prophylaxis, prophylac-
 tic
 propinquity
 propitiator, propitiatory
 propitious
 proprietary
 *proscenium, *pl* pros-
 cenia

proscribe (denounce)
 dist from prescribe
 (set down)
 proselyte, proselytism,
 proselytize
 prospector
 prospectuses, *pl of* pros-
 pectus
 protector
 protégé, fem protégée
 proteid, protein
 protester
 protractor
 protrude
 protuberance
 proving, provable
 provisor, provisory
 provisos, *pl of* proviso
 pseudonym
 psychology
 psychiatry
 ptarmigan
 pterodactyl
 ptomaine
 puerile, -ly
 puerperal
 puisne
 pulchritude
 pumpkin
 punctilio, *pl* punctilios
 punctilious
 purchasing, purchasable
 purlieus, *pl of* purlieu
 purloin

purposeful, purposeless
 pursuing
 pursuivant
 pusillanimity
 putrefy, putrefaction,
 putrescent
 pygmy
 pyjamas
 Pyrenees
 pyrites
 pyrotechnic
 pyrrhic

Quadruped
 quadruple
 quarantine
 quarrel, quarrelling,
 quarrelled, quarreller,
 quarrelsome
 quartet
 quartos, *pl of* quarto
 quatrain
 quatrefoil
 quay
 querying
 querulous
 questionnaire
 queue
 quiddity
 quidnunc
 quiescent, quiescence
 quieted

Quinquagesima
 quinquennial
 quinsy
 quintet
 quixotic
 quotas, *pl of* quota
 quoth
 quotient

Rabbis, *pl of* rabbi
 raciness
 racoon
 radiator
 radiance
 radish
 radii, *pl of* radius
 raging
 raisin
 rakish
 rancour, rancorous
 ransom
 rascalion
 rarefy, rarefaction
 rateable, rating
 ratios, *pl of* ratio
 receivable
 recidivist
 recognize, recognizable,
 recognizance
 recollect
 recommend
 recompense
 reconcilable
 reconciliatory

SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

reconnaissance	reredos
reconnoitre	rescuing, rescuable
rectified, rectifier	resolvable
reducible	resonator
referring, referred, re- ferrer	respector
reflection	respirator
reflector	resplendent
refrangible	responsible
refrigerator	restorable
registrar (keeper of records) <i>dist from</i> register (record)	resumable, resuming
rejuvenescence	resurrection
religion, religious	resuscitate
remedial, remediable	reticence
remembrance	retrievable
reminiscence	reversible
remissness	rhinoceros
remitting, remitted, re- mittance, remitter	rhododendron
remonstrator	rhubarb
removable	rickets, rickety
renaissance	ricochetting, ricocheted
reparable	rideable
repellent	ridiculous
replaceable	righteous
reprehensible	rigorous
repressible	rinse
reprieve	risible
reproducible	rissole
reptilian	rivalling, rivalry
repudiator	riveting, riveted, riveter
reputable	rodomontade
	rosily, rosiness
	rotary
	rottenness
	rotunda

rubicund
rueful, ruing
ruling, rulable
ruminator

Sabretache

saccharine
sacerdotal
sacrament
sacrilege, sacrilegious
sacrosanct
saddler
Sadducee
sagacious
salacious
salicylate, salicylic (acid)
salubrious
salvos, *pl of* salvo
sanatorium, *pl* sanatoria
sanctimonious
sapient
saponaceous
sapphire
sarcophagus, *pl* sarcophagi
sarsaparilla
sassafras
satellite
satiety
saxophone
scarcity
scatheless

sceptic, *dist from* septic
Scheherazade
schirrus, *dist from* cirrus
schottische
sciatica
scimitar
scintilla
scintillate
scrutator
scurrilous
scythe
secretary, *dist from*
secretory (adj)
sedentary
seize
seneschal
Sennacherib
sensibility
separate, separator
sepulchre, sepulchral
seraglio, *pl* seraglios
serum, *pl* sera
sesquipedalian
Sexagesima
shako, *pl* shakos
shallot
shandygaff
shapeable
shibboleth
shillelagh
shoeing
sibyl, sybilline
sidereal
siding

SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

siege	spoonfuls, <i>pl of spoon</i>
silhouette	ful
sillabub	squeal
simony	squeezing, squeezable
Sinai	squirearchy
singeing	stalish
siphon	stationary (fixed), <i>dist</i>
siren	<i>from stationery (paper)</i>
sirocco	steadfast
Sisyphus	stereotype
sizable	stertorous
skilful	stiletto, <i>pl</i> stilettos
skinniness	stillness
skyey, skying	stomachic
slanderous	storey (floor of building)
slyly, slyness	<i>pl</i> storeys
smokable, smoky	strait - laced, strait -
sobriquet	•waistcoat
sola-topi (not solar)	striving
solemnness	strychnine
soliloquy	studios, <i>pl of studio</i>
solvable	stupefy
solvency	stymie
somersault	subduing
somnambulism	subpoena, subpoenaed
sonorous	subsidence
sootiness	subsistence
soufflé	subterranean
spadefuls, <i>pl of spade-</i>	subtle, subtlety
ful	subtract, subtraction
sparsity	succès d'estime
spigot	successful
spongy	succinct
spontaneous spontaneity	succour

suffragan	tablespoonfuls, <i>pl of</i>
sulphureous, sulphurous	tablespoonful
summary (short) <i>dist</i>	talismans, <i>pl of</i> talisman
<i>from</i> summery (summer-like)	tangible
sumptuous	tatterdemalion
supercargo, <i>pl</i> super-	tattoo
cargoes	teaspoonfuls, <i>pl of</i> tea-
supercilious	spoonful
supererogatory	technical
superintendent	teetotal, teetotaler
supernumerary	teetotum
supersede	temperance
suppressor	tenebrous
surreptitious	Tennessee
surveillance	tergiversation
suspicious	termagant
susurrous	terpsichorean
sweetbriar	tessellate
swinish	testamentary
sycamore	tête-à-tête
sycophant	therapeutics
syllabuses, <i>pl of</i> syllabus	thermal, thermionic
syllogism	theses, <i>pl of</i> thesis
symmetry	thieving
synonymous	thousandth
synopses, <i>pl of</i> synopsis	thralldom
syringe, syringeing	thunderous
syrupy	tic douloureux
T ableaux, <i>pl of</i>	tigerish
tableau	tinge, tingeing
ables d'hôte, <i>pl of</i> table	titillate
d'hôte	titivate
	tobaccos, <i>pl of</i> tobacco
	tobogganing

SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

tomatoes, *pl of* tomato
 tonsillitis
 topi
 tormentor
 tornadoes, *pl of* tornado
 torpedoes, *pl of* torpedo
 torsos, *pl of* torso
 tout-de-suite
 tout-ensemble
 traceable
 trachea
 tragedian
 tranquil, tranquillity,
 tranquillize
 transferable, transference
 transitive
 translatable, translator
 trellis -ed
 tremolo
 triposes, *pl of* tripos
 trousseaux, *pl of* trousseau
 truly
 trumpeting, trumpeted
 truncheon
 trunnion
 Tsar, Tsarevitch,
 Tsarevna, Tsaritsa
 tunnelling, tunnelled
 Turkoman, *pl* Turkomans
 tyrannicide, tyranny

Ubiquitous
 Ullswater
 ultramarine
 ultramontane
 ululate, ululation
 umbelliferous
 umbrageous
 umbrella
 unctuous
 underrate
 unnameable
 unwieldy
 usquebaugh

Valetudinarian
 variegated
 Velazquez
 veld, *not* veldt
 velocipede
 venal, *dist from* venial
 veranda
 vermilion
 veterinary
 vetoes, *pl of* veto
 vicarious
 vicissitude
 victualling, victualler
 vigorous
 vinegar
 violoncello, *pl*
 violoncellos
 viragoes, *pl of* virago

virtuoso, *pl* virtuosos
 viscera
 viscous, viscosity
 visibility
 vistas, *pl of* vista
 vitiate, viator
 vitreous
 volcanoes, *pl of* volcano
 voracity, *dist from* vera-
 city
 vying

Walnut

walrus

wassail

wayzgoose, *pl* wayz-
 gooses

Wedgwood (pottery)

welsher
 Westmorland
 whereabouts
 whereas
 wherein
 wherewithal
 whether
 whimsy
 wholly
 wilful
 withhold
 woebegone, woeful
 woollen, woolly
 wrath

Zeroes, *pl of* zero
 zigzagging

PROBLEMS OF ADDRESS

Esquire

LET us begin with that curious survival *Esquire*. When should it be used? Of whom should it be used? More important, of whom should it *not* be used?

It is a formidable problem, and those who are shy of it can console themselves with the knowledge that it has been causing trouble for centuries. To go back only three, the lawyers of Charles I's time were much concerned over the loose way in which the title was bandied about. Selden, for instance, sarcastically attacked those who adopted it in default of something better, and there is possibly a hint of the same scorn in the contemporary couplet of Francis Quarles

How can I mend my title then? Where can
Ambition find a higher style than man?

About the same time Coke, the famous judge, laid it down that every person who was legally a Gentleman was entitled to be addressed as Esquire. Camden, the antiquary, investigated the matter more fully, and finally declared that the only true and genuine Esquires belonged to four classes (1) the eldest sons of Knights, and

their eldest sons in perpetuity, (2) the eldest sons of the younger sons of Peers, and their eldest sons in perpetuity, (3) Esquires created by the Crown and their eldest sons, (4) those who bear offices of trust under the Crown But still the poaching went on

A generation later we find Pepys purring with satisfaction because Mr Blackburne had addressed him "with his own hand" as "S P , Esq , of which God knows I was not a little proud " Students of Boswell will remember how angry he was with Sir John Hawkins for having described him as "Mr James Boswell, a native of Scotland," and how he retaliated by describing Hawkins as "Mr John Hawkins, an attorney " In Victorian times, I am told, some of our railway companies used to address first-class season ticket holders as Esquire and third-class as plain Mister. Tax collectors have been known to base the distinction on the amount their victims owed to the State, and I know of a rate collecting office in which the title hangs on a kind of residential qualification if you live in one suburb you are presumed to have an income of over £500 a year, and are most certainly an Esquire, if you live in another, and poorer, suburb you are not Clearly the complications have grown since the days when an Esquire was simply a Knight's fag, who looked forward to becoming a Knight himself someday.

The formal answer to the problem is that for legal or ceremonial purposes ten classes of Esquires are now recognized. They are (1) Sons of Peers during their fathers' lives, and the younger sons of such Peers after their fathers' deaths, the eldest sons of Peers' younger sons, and their eldest sons in perpetuity (2) Foreign noblemen (3) The eldest sons of Baronets and Knights (4) Persons bearing arms and the title of Esquire by letters patent (5) Esquires of the Bath and their eldest sons (6) Barristers (but not solicitors) (7) Magistrates and Mayors while in commission or office (8) The holders of superior offices under the Crown and members of certain Orders, (8) Persons described as Esquires by the Sovereign in their patents, commissions, or appointments (10) Attorneys in colonies where the functions of counsel and attorney are united.

But this does not help us much. I have just asked a democratic young friend of mine how he would make out a cheque to his butcher, John Jones, to repay a loan of £5 made to him by the butcher at their golf club. He replied at once, "To John Jones, Esq." Then I asked him how he would make out a cheque to the butcher in payment of his monthly meat bill. He said, "To Mr John Jones, of course." When I remarked, "But they are the same person," all he could do was to

spread out his hands in a gesture of helplessness I sympathized with him. There is nothing to be done about it but to turn to common usage, and common usage tells us that my democratic young friend was right. In his hours of ease every man is an Esquire, behind the counter, or at the bench, if you buy from him or give him an instruction, he becomes plain Mister. The distinction cannot be justified, but that it is made every day by reasonable men cannot be denied. Occasionally someone suggests that the word Esquire be abolished. It would be easier to abolish the Bank of England. A title that lost its real meaning centuries ago, but that we still demand from our fellowmen as by right—nay, that is as indispensable to our peace of mind as a pair of braces—clearly ministers to a deeply rooted instinct in human nature, and will survive whether we like it or not.

“—— *Junior, Esquire,*” or “—— *Esquire,*
Junior”

The use of Esquire carries with it a minor problem that has often been put to me. Ought one to write “John Brown, Jun, Esq,” or “John Brown, Esq, Jun”? I was surprised to read in a standard American dictionary the other day that “the first form is usual in England, and the

second in Scotland " I can think of no justification whatever for the second form As my colleague Mr Whitten is never tired of remarking, there is no rule in the matter, therefore the appeal must be to common sense The common sense of the matter seems to me to be that "jun " is as much a part of John Brown's identity as his Christian name, it is a personal description vital to our understanding of which John Brown is meant, and so should precede what is merely a courtesy title common to John Browns everywhere It is an invariable rule, however, that all degrees and distinctions which do not carry a title should be enumerated after "Esq,," e g "John Jones, Esq, C B " Another rule that may be noted here is that honours always precede degrees, e g "Sir James Robinson, K C B, M A, B Sc "

A married woman's Christian name

In writing to a married woman, when should one use her own initials or Christian name, when her husband's, and when no initials at all? I sensed a domestic crisis when this inquiry reached me the other day from a lady who said it had led to "a slight argument" with her mother-in-law, who lived in the same house

Again there is no established rule The usual practice is to use the husband's initials, but there

are exceptions. A married woman with a banking account in her own name would be addressed by that name (that is, in the terms of her usual signature) by the bank, and other business or legal documents which recognized her separate identity would follow the same rule. A divorced woman too might reasonably be expected to prefer her own initials. In more formal communications it is well to follow the practice of addressing titled people. Thus the wife of the head of a family should be addressed simply as "Mrs ——" If she becomes a widow, the wife of her eldest son becomes "Mrs ——" and she herself takes her late husband's initials. If she has no married sons she remains plain "Mrs ——".

Both married and single women are addressed formally in writing as "Dear Madam."

The Rev

It is a vulgarism to address, or to refer to, "The Rev John Smith" as "The Rev Smith." If his initials are not known, write "The Rev Mr Smith" or "The Rev — Smith."

"Sir" with initials

In addressing, or referring to, a baronet or knight, always use his Christian name, and never merely an initial, thus "Sir John Smith," not

"Sir J Smith" Practice varies in the use of other initials, if there are any For instance, Sir Henry J Wood apparently prefers to retain the "J", no doubt because it has established itself so firmly in the public mind Most titled people, however, object to being addressed by their initials on the ground that initials are merely labour-saving devices They maintain that their proper style is set by the King himself When he dubs John Henry Smith a knight he does not say "Rise, Sir J H," but "Rise, Sir John" When in doubt, therefore, follow the King's example use the first Christian name

Limited Companies

There are endless arguments over the way to address a limited company They are usually started by pedants who apparently want us to believe that because a railway is made of rails and sleepers a railway company cannot consist of human beings, that it is misleading to write "Messrs Garden Produce, Ltd," because garden produce belongs to the vegetable kingdom, while human beings belong to the animal kingdom I am afraid I have little patience with arguments of this kind Is a letter likely to go astray because it is addressed to "Messrs Garden Produce, Ltd"? Of course not The use of "Messrs,"

like the use of "Mr " or "Esq ,," is a courtesy, and none the less so because it is addressed to a hundred people instead of one Let those grudge it who have nothing worse to worry about

Of course there is an easy way out Every registered company has a secretary If your conscience is uneasy, address your letter to him.

The Peerage

The forms of address demanded by the Peerage are too technical to call for detailed discussion here, in any case they are fully dealt with in many easily accessible publications A few general remarks on the subject may, however, be found useful

There are five grades in the Peerage In order of precedence they are Dukes, Marquesses (this spelling is preferable to Marquises), Earls, Viscounts, and Barons In ordinary social intercourse a Duke and Duchess are addressed simply as "Duke" or "Duchess," unless they are members of the Royal family, in which case the custom is to address them as "Sir" or "Ma'am," and to avoid the bluntness of "you" by substituting "Your Royal Highness " Again, in ordinary conversation, all other peers and peeresses (as well as holders of courtesy titles, to be explained in a moment), are addressed as "Lord ——" or

“Lady —”, No distinction is made when addressing either a Marchioness, a Countess, a Viscountess, or the wife of a Baron, a Baronet, or a Knight They are all “Lady —”

“Lady” is in fact the most overworked word in the Peerage The daughters of Dukes, Marquesses, and Earls are all entitled to have it prefixed to their Christian names Suppose, for example, a Duke of Doncaster bears the family name of Colclough, and has a daughter named Mary She will be known as Lady Mary Colclough, and will be addressed in ordinary conversation as Lady Mary (although it may be said here that the less titles are used, in conversation the better) She will never in any circumstances be referred to as “Lady Colclough” Incidentally, if she marries a man of lower rank than her own, named, say, Johnson, she retains her own rank and is henceforward known as Lady Mary Johnson The daughters of Viscounts and Barons have “The Honourable” prefixed to their Christian names—for example “The Hon Helen Jones”—when they are written to, but this is purely an eye-title it is never used in speech, never even on visiting cards

Three more things remain to be said about “Lady” As we have seen, it is sometimes followed by a Christian name Sometimes, too,

it is (1) preceded by a Christian name, (2) followed by a man's Christian name in brackets, and (3) preceded by "The " The meaning of the first form is that the lady indicated is a dowager (that is, the mother, stepmother, grandmother, or possibly the great-grandmother, of the present holder of the title), but dislikes being called one. She thinks the word suggests old age, and so indeed it does to many people. It is a pity that it should, for its real meaning has been obscured by unfortunate associations. It means simply a woman who receives a dowry, and is a survival from the days when such women, the widows of landed proprietors, were pensioned by the head of the family and lived in "the dower house." Its usefulness to-day consists in distinguishing the mother of the holder of a title from his wife. If he is unmarried his mother continues to be known as she was in his father's lifetime. The meaning of the second form is that it has become necessary to distinguish the wives of two or more Baronets or Knights holding the same surname, as in the sentence "The hostesses were Lady (Henry) Smith and Lady (George) Smith." Heraldic purists turn up their eyes at this device, but it fills too real a need to be dispensed with. The prefix "The" is reserved for ladies of the Peerage. Again, these three distinctions are intended only for the eye: they are never used in

speech A dowager is addressed in her widowhood exactly as she was in her husband's lifetime, and Lady (Henry) Smith and Lady (George) Smith are both addressed as "Lady Smith"

Peers are of five kinds (1) Peers of the Realm, who sit in the House of Lords by right, (2) Life Peers, nowadays invariably Law Lords who also sit in the House of Lords, (3) certain Bishops, who forfeit their seats when they resign their Sees, (4) and (5) Scottish and Irish Peers, some of whom are elected by their number to sit in the House of Lords, and are called Representative Peers They sit for life, but as the machinery for electing Irish peers was destroyed when the Free State came into being, and vacancies cannot therefore be filled, the next generation or two will see the last of them

As has been said, all peers below the rank of Duke are addressed as "Lord ——" But others besides peers are addressed in the same way As a man is raised from rank to rank in the peerage he accumulates titles as he goes Thus a Duke of Doncaster might also hold the titles of Marquess of Middlesbrough, Earl of Edmonton, Viscount Wolverhampton and Baron Wilkins of Wakefield, collected either by himself or by his ancestors. His eldest son would automatically take what is called the courtesy title—for he has none of the privileges of a Peer—of Marquess of

Middlesbrough, and the Marquess's eldest son would be born Earl of Edmonton. Holders of such courtesy titles are not peers, but are entitled to be addressed as "Lord ——" And just as the daughters of Dukes and Marquesses take the title "Lady" with their Christian and family names, so the younger sons of these peers take the title "Lord" with theirs. Thus the two younger sons of the Duke of Doncaster might be known as Lord Robert Wilkins and Lord John Wilkins, and would be addressed as "Lord Robert" and "Lord John" in informal conversation. The younger sons of Earls, Viscounts, and Barons are alike described on paper as "The Honourable ——" and are invariably addressed in speech as "Mr ——".

The word Baron is never used as a title in this country, except in official documents, but peeresses in their own right sometimes prefer to be known as "Baroness ——".

The title Dame is always used in speech with the holder's Christian name, as "Dame Elizabeth," "Dame Margaret."

The Church

Archbishops are invariably addressed in conversation as "Your Grace," Bishops usually as "My Lord," or more informally as "Bishop," Deans as "Mr Dean," Archdeacons as

“Mr Archdeacon,” Canons as “Canon —,”
Prebendaries as “Prebendary —” and Provosts
as “Mr Provost ”

The Pope is addressed as “Your Holiness,”
Cardinals and Cardinal Archbishops as “Your
Eminence,” and lower ranks as above Monsi-
gnore are addressed as “Monsignor—,” Abbots
as “Father Abbot,” and Provincials and Priests
as “Father — ”

Hyphenated Names

People with two hyphenated names are usually
addressed by both of them in formal conversation,
and by the second in informal conversation
Those with three names are usually addressed by
the last only

Local Bigwigs

In London and the larger provincial cities the
Lord Mayor is usually addressed in speech as
“My Lord Mayor ” Mayors are addressed as
“Mr Mayor ” In writing, “Esq ” should not be
used after such titles as Alderman, Councillor, or
Doctor

Visiting Cards

How should a man without a title describe
himself on his visiting- and business-cards? On

both as "Mr —— " If he holds any degrees or other special qualifications he should display them only on his business-card, and then only if they are relevant to his business It is bad form to print them on a private card a visiting-card is not a testimonial Scotch people, I have found, are often more naive than the English in this respect I once knew a graduate of a northern university who not only put his degree on his cards, but put it at the end of every letter as well A gentleman who wrote to me the other day from a Lowland town went even further He enclosed a card on which he described himself as "Ex-Provost ——, J P " Provost if you like, but never, surely, Ex-Provost! I may be told that my correspondent is following a well-established custom If he is I cannot help thinking that the custom is an unfortunate one, based less on usefulness than on human vanity We are all apt to cherish those things that mark us off from the common herd, but Ex-Provost——! It is fanning the embers too much

MISPRONOUNCED WORDS

OVER two hundred years ago Swift fought hard for a standard English pronunciation. He failed, as many others have failed, partly because of our lively habit of seizing a good word without asking where it comes from, and then pronouncing it as we jolly well like, and partly because we suspect—when we do not openly resent—any attempt to tell us how to talk. The man who sets himself up as an authority on pronunciation is asking for trouble, and he usually gets it. Whenever those modern Swifts, the B B C Advisory Committee on Spoken English, issue a list of their latest decisions the correspondence columns of the newspapers hum like a disturbed hive. Yorkshiremen rise in defence of their open vowels, Scotchmen in defence of their rolled *r*, retired schoolmasters passionately insist that we must keep the *hw* sound in words like *whither* and *where* (for all I know the B B C A C S E may agree with them in this, but dictionaries differ) and retired Army officers angrily protest that during a lifetime spent between Port Said and Poona they never once heard this or that accent placed on this or that syllable. How long they will all be able to survive the B B C steamroller is an interesting subject for speculation.

Foreigners often say we are an insular people,

and in some respects they are right, but however uncomfortable we may feel when we travel abroad, however incapable we may be of seeing the foreigner's point of view, we can at any rate claim that our language is less insular than any other. No other contains so many alien words, and chiefly on that account no other is capable of expressing so many shades of meaning.

This invasion of foreign words and phrases, and their gradual naturalization, is one reason why we have no standard of pronunciation. Another is that America keeps us continually on the move, and a third is that there are forces in any living language (as is suggested over and over again in this book) that have hitherto proved too strong to be kept in check by any rule. But we are an illogical people. Although we bristle when we are given unsolicited advice, although we argue solemnly that bodies like the Académie Française are the enemies of progress, most of us have a secret longing for a final court of appeal to which we can turn when the dictionaries puzzle us, as they so often do. I have tried in this chapter to create such a tribunal. Individually its members may be open to attack, but when they speak with one voice their verdict should be authoritative enough to clinch any argument.

I went to work in this way: I first prepared a

MISPRONOUNCED WORDS

list of about 1,500 words which were either difficult to pronounce in themselves, or which were made so by the conflicting views of our dictionary-makers. I then formed a jury of the dictionary-makers, and took a majority vote of their first preferences. My object being to present a clear decision on every disputed point, I ignored second preferences unless they could be used as a makeweight in balancing first preferences.

Even so the task was not as simple as it sounds. I discovered some extraordinary variations of opinion. *Congeries*, for instance, was given a different pronunciation in almost every dictionary I consulted, and such an apparently simple word as *parquet* was pronounced by the best authorities *par-kay*, *par-ket*, and *par-ket*. *Armada* was pronounced *ar-mah-da* in only one of my dictionaries, although I believe that pronunciation to be far commoner than *ar-may-da*. I had therefore to make a compromise with infallibility. All those words on which opinion is so evenly divided that I myself had to give a casting vote, either after consulting one or two American dictionaries or from my own knowledge of usage, are marked with an asterisk. The reader can do what he likes with these, but the other recommendations, he can rest assured, are based on the best available opinion.

My jury consisted of the 1937 edition of Jones's

English Pronouncing Dictionary (Dent), an authority which I believe reflects the trend of educated speech more accurately than any other, the two-volume *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (O U P, 1933), which has naturally superseded the older *Oxford English Dictionary* in matters of pronunciation, Wyld's *Universal English Dictionary* (Routledge, 1932), for general purposes by far the best single-volume dictionary in the language, the Fowlers' *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (O U P, 1934), invaluable for its discriminating attitude towards popular usage, some of the lists of the B B C Advisory Committee, Webster's monumental *New International Dictionary* (Bell, 1934), the best American dictionary I know of, and the popular and more conservative Nuttall's *Standard Dictionary* (Warne, 1929). In addition I often consulted Fowler's *Modern English Usage* and Funk and Wagnall's *New Standard Dictionary* (1931), also, thanks to a useful table of different opinions in Webster, I was able to call into consultation now and again the American *Century Dictionary* and Passy and Hempl's *International French-English and English-French Dictionary*. To all these authorities I wish to express the fullest acknowledgements.

I ought to add that in drawing up my list of recommendations I did not treat all these

authorities as equal My tendency was to place most reliance on Jones, the S O D , Wyld, and Fowler If any three of them agreed I regarded them as unassailable by the rest Generally speaking I attached more weight to any English dictionary than to any American, but in a few instances I turned to Webster for the casting vote

The phonetic system I have adopted, and my syllabic divisions, will not, I am afraid, satisfy the expert, but I hope they will serve for the ordinary reader, who is perhaps more puzzled by stresses than by the niceties of vowel sounds The system is

a as in gate	<i>ay</i>	o as in note	<i>oh</i>
„ father	<i>ah</i>	„ rot	<i>o</i>
„ hat	<i>a</i>	„ „	„
e as in feet	<i>ee</i>	u as in union	<i>yoo</i>
„ get	<i>e</i>	„ tune	<i>ew</i>
i as in fight	<i>y*</i>	„ cut	<i>u</i>
„ fit	<i>i</i>	ow „ how	<i>ou</i>

s always soft, z always hard, k=hard c, th as in *things* is described as unvoiced, and in *the* as voiced

*My use of y to represent the long i has been deliberately inconsistent, but not, I hope, misleading I could not offer the reader y-oh-din as the phonetic pronunciation of *cadine*, accordingly I have used eye- to represent an initial long i (e.g. eye-dil for idyll) In the same way I shrank from writing frag-yl for *fragile* I have used -ile for such endings and have also retained -ite, -ize and -ire I have, however, used -yn for -ine in order to distinguish this ending from -een and -in

Stressed syllables are given in italic type The authorities named above are indicated by the following abbreviations Jones (J), Shorter Oxford (S O D), Concise Oxford (C O D), Wyld (W), Fowler (F), Webster (Web), Nuttall (N), Funk and Wagnall (Funk & W)

Abdomen ab-*doh*-men
 absinth ab-*sinth* (*th* unv)
 absurd ab-*serd* (not
 -zerd)
 accent (verb) ak-*sent*,
 (noun) ak-*sent*
 accolade ak-o-*layd*
 accomplice a-*kom*-plis
 accoutre, -ment a-*koo*-
 ter, -tri-ment
 acetic a-*see*-tik
 acoustic a-*kow*-stik
 actual akt-*yew*-al
 acumen a-*kew*-men
 adage ad-*ij*
 addict (noun) ad-*ikt*
 addressee ad-*dress*-ee
 adept (noun) ad-*ept*
 adherent ad-*heer*-ent
 adieu a-*dew*
 ad infinitum ad in-*fi*-
 ny-tum
 adj-Pron all words
 beginning thus a*j*-
 (e g adjure=a-*joor*,
 adjunct=a*j*-unkt)
 ad libitum ad lib-*i*-tum
 admirable ad-mi-*ra*-bl
 adobe a-*doh*-bi
 adulate ad-*yew*-layt
 adult a-*dult*
 advertisement ad-*ver*-
 tiz-ment

advisedly (four syllables)
 æ-æ-ac-oe- All pron
 ee, e g ægis e-*jis*,
 æsthetic=ees-theet
 aerate ay-er-*ayt*
 aerial (adj and noun)
 ayer-*i*-al
 affix (verb), af-*fix*,
 (noun) af-*fix*
 Afrikaner af-ri-*kan*-der
 again, against* a-*gen*,
 -*genst*
 agate ag-*at*
 aggrandize, -ment ag-
 ran-dize (but a-*gran*-
 diz-ment)
 agile a*j*-*ile*
 aigret, aigrette ay-*gret*
 al- all- Pron awl- in the
 foll and their deriva-
 tives albest, alder,
 alderman, almanac,
 altercate, alternate
 Pron al- in albino,
 albumen (acc sec
 syll) alchemy, alcove,
 almoner, altimeter
 (acc sec syll) alti-
 tude
 albino al-*bee*-noh
 alibi al-*i*-by
 alkali, alkaline al-*ka*-li
 al-*ka*-lyn

ally, allies al-ly, al-lize
 Aloysius al-o-*ish*-i-us
 amateur am-a-ter
 ambergris am-ber-grees
 amenable a-mee-na-ble
 amenity a-men-it-i
 amoeba a-mee-ba
 amok pron and preferably spelt a-muck
 amoral ay-mor-al
 amour a-moor
 ampersand am-per-sand
 anaemic a-nee-mik
 analogous a-nal-o-gus
 anchovy an-*choh*-vi
 ankylosis ang-ki-*loh*-sis
 anecdotage an-ek-doh-tij
 angina pectoris an-jy-na
 pec-tor-is
 anglice ang-glis-i
 an line an-i-lyn
 an-madvert an-i-mad-
 vert
 annex(e) an-nex (both
 v and n)
 annihilate* silent h
 annun-ciate -ciation
 a-nun-shi-ayt, -si-
 ay-shun
 Anthony silent h
 antinomy an-tin-o-mi
 antiphonal an-tif-o-nal
 antipodes an-tip-o-deez
 antiquary an-ti-kwar-i

aperient a-*peer*-i-ent
 a posteriori ay pos-ter
 i-*oh*-ry
 apparatus ap-pa-ray-tus
 apparent ap-payr-ent
 apostle a-pos-l
 applicable ap-lik-a-bl
 apotheosis a-poth-i-*oh*-
 sis (*th* unv)
 appoggiatura a-poj-a-
 too-ra
 apposite ap-po-zit
 appre-ciable, -ciate, -cia-
 tion -shi- in first two,
 but -si-ay-shun
 a priori ay pry-*oh*-ry
 apropos ap-roh-poh
 aquatic a-*kwat*-ik
 aqua vitae ak-wa vy-tee
 aquiline ak-wi-lyn
 arbitrament ar-bit-ra-
 ment
 arbitrage 'ar-bi-trij
 arch- (=chief, leader,
 greatest) always pron
 ark- before a vowel,
 as in *archiepiscopal*,
 archidiaconal, *arche-*
 type, *archimandrite*,
 architrave *Archæo-*
 (=ancient) also takes
 the k sound
 aria ah-ri-a
 arid ar-rid

aristocrat *ar-ris-toh-crat*
 armada The S O D ,
 F, W, Web, Funk
 & W, N, and the
 B B C all recom-
 mend *ar-may-da*
 Only J prefers *ar-*
mah-da and Web and
 Funk & W admit it
 as an alternative
 armistice *ar-mis-tis*
 arpeggio *ar-pej-yoh*
 arriere pensée *ar-ri-ayr*
pawn-say
 artificer *ar-tif-1-ser*
 artisan *ar-ti-zan*
 artiste *ar-teest*
 arum *ayr-um*
 Aryan *ayr-1-an*
 ascetic *as-set-ic*
 asexual *a-sek-shu-al*
 assignation *ass-ig-nay-*
shun
 assignee *ass-1-nee*
 associ-ate, -ation* *as-*
soh-shi-ayt, -si-ay-shun
 asthma* *as-ma*
 ate et
 attribute (verb) *at-trib-*
ewt, (noun) at-rib-
ewt
 Augean *aw-jee-an*
 auger *aw-ger*
 augur *aw-ger*

August, august (month)
aw-gust, (majestic) aw-
gust
 aunt ahnt
 autochthon *aw-tok-thon*
(th unv)
 autogen -ous, -y *aw-toj-*
en-us, -en-1
 automaton *aw-tom-a-*
ton
 automobile* *aw-toh-*
moh-beel
 avalanche *av-a-lahnsh*
 ave *ah-vi*
 avia -tion, -tor *ay-vi-*
ay-shun, ay-vi-ay-ter
 avid *av-id*
 awry *a-ry*
 ayah *eye-a*
 azure *azh-ur*

Baccarat *bak-ka-rah*
 bacchante* *bak-kant*
 bacillus *ba-sill-us*
 backgammon *bak-gam-*
un
 badinage* *bad-1-nahzh*
 bakelite *bay-kel-ite*
 baksheesh *bak-sheesh*
 balata *bal-a-ta*
 balderdash *bawl-der-*
dash
 ballade *bal-lahd*
 ballet *bal-lay*

balustrade bal-us-trayd
 banal* bay-nal
 banjoist ban-joh-ist
 bas-relief bass re-leef
 bathos bay-thos
 baton bat-n
 batrachian ba-trayk-yan
 beau-ideal boheye-dee-al
 bedizen be-dy-zen
 been been
 begum bee-gum
 Benedictine ben-e-dik-
 tin
 benignity ben-ig-ni-ti
 berserker ber-ser-ker
 bibliophile bib-li-o-fyl
 binocular bin-ok-u-lar
 bivouac biv-oo-ak
 blackguard blag-ard
 blanc-mange* bla-
 monzh
 bona fide boh-na fy-de
 bosom buz-m (-u- as in
 pull)
 bourgeois (class of
 society) boorzh-wah,
 (type) ber-jois
 bourn(e)* boh-an
 bowdlerize boud-ler-ize
 bow-wow bou-wou
 bravado bra-vah-doh
 Brobdingnag brob-ding-
 nag

bromine broh-min
 brooch brohch
 broom broom
 brougham* broom
 brusque broosk
 buffet (sideboard) boo-
 fay
 bureaucracy bu-rok-ra-
 si
 Byzantine be-zan-tyn

Cabaret kab-a-ray
 cacao ka-kay-oh
 cachinnation kak-in-
 nay-shun
 caffeine* kaf-i-een
 caisson kay-son
 calcareous kal-kayr-i-us
 calends kal-ends
 calibre kal-i-ber
 caliph kay-lif
 calligraphickal-e-graf-ik
 Calliope kal-ly-oh-pi
 calyx kay-lik
 camellia* kam-eel-ya
 camelopard kam-mel-o-
 pard
 campanile kam-pan-eel-i
 canalize kan-al-ize
 canard* kan-ar
 candelabra kan-del-ay-
 bra
 Canopus kan-oh-pus
 cantabile kan-tah-bil-ay

cantharides *kan-thar-i-deez*
 cantilever *kan-ti-lee-ver*
 cantonment *kan-ton-ment*
 caoutchouc *kou-chook*
 cap-à-pie *kap-a-pee*
 Capuchin *kap-u-chin*
 carillon* *kar-ril-yun*
 carmine *kar-min*
 Cassiopeia *kass-i-oh-pee-ya*
 cathedra *ka-thee-dra*
 catheta *kath- -ta*
 Caucasian *kaw-kaze-yun*
 caviar *kav-i-ahr*
 cayenne *kay-en*
 cenotaph *sen-oh-taf*
 centenary *sen-tee-nar-i*
 cerement *seer-ment*
 certiorari *ser-shi-o-rah-ry*
 Cesarean *se-zay-ri-an*
 Cesarevitch *sez-ar-ay-vitch* (but the horse-race is *sez-ar-i-vitch*)
 chagrin* *sha-grin*
 chalcedony *kal-sed-on-i*
 chalybeate *ka-lib-i-at*
 chaperon *shap-er-ohn*
 chaplain *chap-lin*

charabanc *shar-ra-bang*
 charade *sha-rahd*
 chargé d'affaires *shar-zhay daff-ayr*
 Charybdis *kar-ib-dis*
 chastisement *chas-tiz-ment*
 chauffeur* *shoh-fur*
 chef d'œuvre *shay de(r)vr*
 cherubim *cher-u-bim*
 chestnut *ches-nut*
 chicanery *chic-ay-ner-i*
 chimera *lim-ee-ra*
 chiropodist *ky-rop-o-dist*
 chivalry *shuv-al-ri*
 cicatrice *sik-a-tris*
 Cicely *sis-e-li*
 cicerone *chi-cher-roh-nay*
 cinchona *sin-koh-na*
 circuitous *ser-kezw-it-us*
 cirrhosis *si-roh-sis*
 cirrus *si-rus*
 civilization* *siv-i-liz-ay-shun*
 clerestory *klear-stoh-ri*
 clematis *klem-at-is*
 clientele* *kly-en-teel*
 Only W, J, and N
 prefer the Fr pron
 clothes* *kloh-z*

MISPRONOUNCED WORDS

coadjutor* koh-ad-ju-tor
 cobra koh-bra
 cocaine koh-kayn
 cocci kok-sy
 coccyx kok-siks
 codicil kod-i-sil
 codify* koh-dif-y
 cognac kohn-yak
 cognizance kog-niz-ans
 cognomen kog-noh-men
 cognoscente kon-yosh-en-ti
 colander kul-an-der
 collect (verb) kol-ekt,
 (noun) kol-ekt
 colloque kol-lohg
 colporteur* kol-pohr-ter
 comatose koh-ma-tohs
 combat (noun and verb) kom-bat
 comfit kum-fit
 communal kom-yoo-nal
 compact (noun) kom-pakt,
 (adj and verb) kom-pakt
 comparable kom-par-
 abl
 complaisant kum-play-zant
 complex (noun and adj) kom-plex
 compost kom-post
 comptroller kon-troh-ler

computable kom-pew-tabl
 conduit* kon-dit
 confiscate kon-fis-kayt
 conflict (verb) kon-flikt,
 (noun) kon-flikt
 congeries* kon-jee-ri-
 eez
 connoisseur kon-a-ser
 conscientious kon-shi-en-shus
 consols kon-solz
 consort (verb) kon-sort,
 (noun) kon-sort
 consummate (verb) kon-sum-mayt,
 (adj) kun-sum-mayt
 content kun-tent, (but
 when meaning capacity
 or volume, kon-tent)
 contrary kon-trar-i (but
 when meaning self-willed,
 kun-tray-ri)
 controversy kon-troh-ver-si
 contumacy kon-tew-mass-i
 converse (verb) kon-vers,
 (noun) kon-vers
 convict (verb) kon-vikt,
 (noun) kon-vikt
 convoy (verb) kon-voy,
 (noun) kon-voy

coruscate *kor-us-kayt*
 coup d'état *koo day-tah*
 concerto *kon-chayr-toh*
 coup de grâce *koo d(a) grass*
 courteous* *kurt-yus*
 courtesan *kohr-ti-zan*
 coyote *koy-oh-ti*
 cul-de-sac *kool de sak*
 culinary *kew-lin-ar-i*
 cuneiform* *kew-ni-form*
 cupola *kew-poh-la*
 cynosure *sin-oh-shoor*
 Czech *chek*

Dahlia *dayl-ya*
 dais *days*
 daunt *dawnt*
 debouch* *di-boosh*
 debut *di-boo*
 decade *dek-ad*
 decadence, decadent
 dek-a-dens, dek-a-dent
 decisive *di-sy-siv*
 decorous *dek-ohr-us*
 decorum *dek-ohr-um*
 dedicatory *ded-i-kay-tor-i*
 defect *di-fekt*
 deficit *def-i-sit*
 defile (verb) *di-fyl*,
 (noun) *dee-fyl*
 demagoguery *dem-a-gog-i*

demesne *di-mayn*
 demonstrable *dem-on-strabl*
 dentine *den-tin*
 denunciation *de-nun-si-ay-shun*
 deposition *dep-oh-zishn*
 depreciate *de-pree-shi-ayt*
 Derby *dar-bi*
 descant (verb) *des-kant*, (noun) *des-kant*
 desiccate *des-i-kayt*
 desuetude *dez-wi-tewd*
 detail (verb) *de-tayl*,
 (noun) *dee-tayl*
 detonate *det-on-ayt*
 devil *devl*
 diabetic *dy-a-bee-tik*
 diaeresis *dy-ee-ri-sis*
 diagnose *dy-ag-nohz*
 diastasis *dy-ass-ta-sis*
 diastole *dy-ass-to-li*
 diathesis *dy-ath-i-sis*
 didactic *did-ak-tik*
 digest (verb) *di-jest*,
 (noun) *dy-jest*
 digress *dy-gress*
 dilate *dy-layt*
 dilettante *dil-et-an-ti*
 dilute *dy-lewt*
 dinghy *ding-gi*
 diocese *dy-oh-sis*
 diorama *dy-or-ah-ma*

MISPRONOUNCED WORDS

diphtheria *dif-theer-i-a*
 diphthong *dif-thong*
 discard (verb) *dis-kard*,
 (noun) *dis-kard*
 discern *diz-ern*
 discount (verb) *dis-*
kownt, (noun) *dis-*
kownt
 discourse* (noun and
 verb) *dis-koars*
 discourteous* *dis-kurt-*
yus
 discourtesy *dis-kurt-*
es-i
 disfranchisement *dis-*
fran shiz ment
 dishabille *dis-a-beel*
 disputable *dis-pew-tabl*
 disreputable *dis-rep-*
u-tabl
 dissoluble *dis-sol-ewbl*
 dissolve *diz-olv*
 distich *dis-tik*
 distillate *dis-til-ayt*
 distraint *dis-tray*
 divan *di-van*
 diverse *div-ers*
 diversion, diversity
div-er-shun, *div-er-*
sit-i
 divest *div-est*
 divulge *div-uhj*
 dolorous *dol-er-us*
 dolour *do-lur*

domain *doh-mayn*
 domicile *dom-i-syl*
 donation *doh-nay-shun*
 douche *doosh*
 doyen* *doy-en*
 dynamics *dy-nam-iks*
 dynamite *dy-na-myt*
 dynast,* dynasty *din-*
ast, *din-as-ti*
 dysentery *dism-ter-i*

Echelon *esh-e-lon*
 economic *ee-kon-om-ik*
 ecumenical *ee-kew-*
men-ikl
 edelweiss *ay-dl-vys*
 ego *eg-oh*
 egret, *ee-gret*
 either* *eye-ther*
 eleemosynary *el-i-ee-*
moz-i-nar-i
 elegiac *el-i-jy-ak*
 elephantiasis *el-i-fan-*
ty-a-sis
 elision *il-lizh-on*
 elixir *el-liks-er*
 elongate *ee-long-gayt*
 Elysian *il-liz-yan*
 emaciate *im-may-shi-*
ayt
 embryo *em-bri-oh*
 emendation *ee-men-*
day-shun
 emeritus *ee-mer-it-us*

employee	em- <i>p</i> loy-ee	evangelical	ee-van-jel- ik-al
empyrean	em-pi- <i>r</i> ee-an	Eustachian	yoo- <i>st</i> ay- ki-an
enceinte	on(g) <i>saynt</i>	every*	<i>ev</i> -ri
encephalic	en-sef- <i>al</i> -ik	ex cathedra	eks kath- ee-drah
encore	ong- <i>kor</i>	executive, -tor	eks- ek-u-tiv, -tor
encyclical	en-sy-klik-al	exhort	eg- <i>zort</i>
encyclopaedia	e n - s y - klo- <i>pee</i> -dia	exiguous	eks-ig-yew-us
enema	en-i-ma	exile	eks-ile
enervate	en-er-vayt	exotic*	eks-ot-ik
England, English	<i>ing</i> -, not <i>eng</i> -	explic-ate, -ative -atory	eks-pli-c-ayt, -ay-tiv, -ay-tor-i
enigma	en-ig-ma	expurgate	eks-per-gayt
enquiry	SEE inquiry	extempore	eks - t e m - por-i
en route	on(g) <i>root</i>	extirpate	eks-tir-payt
entente cordiale	awn-	extol	eks-tol
entawnt	cor-di-al	extraordinary	eks-tror- din-ar-i
enunciation	e-nun-si- ay-shun	exude	eks-ewd
envelop	en-vel-op	exultation	egs-ul-tay- shun
envelope	en-vel-ohp	eyot	ayt
epicyclic	ep-i-sik-lik	F açade	fa-sahd
epilogue	ep-i-log	facet	fass-et
epoch	ee-pok	facile	fass-il
equine	ee-kwine	Fahrenheit	fa-ren-hite
ermine	er-min	fakir	fa-keer
Eros	ee-ros	falchion	fol-shun
errata, -um	er-rah-ta, -tum		
eschscholtzia*	esh- sholt-si-a		
escort (verb)	es-kort,		
(noun)	es-kort		
espionage	es-pi-on-ij		

MISPRONOUNCED WORDS

falcon* *fol-kn*
 fanatic *fa-nat-ik*
 fantasia *fan-ta-zee-a*
 (S O D, F, J, W,
 Funk & W), 2nd pref
 is *fan-tah-zī-a* and 3rd
 pref *fan-tay-zī-a*
 faro *fayr-o*
 farrago *fa-ray-goh*
 fasces *fass-eez*
 Fascist *fash-ist*
 faucet *faw-set*
 faux pas *foh pah*
 febrile *fee-brile*
 fecund *fee-cund*
 feline *fee-lyn*
 femur *fee-mur*
 fidelity *fid-del-it-ī*
 fiduciary *fy-dew-shar-ī*
 finance *fin-ans*
 flaccid *flak-sid*
 forbade *for-bad*
 forehead *for-ed*
 formidable *for-mid-abl*
 forte (strong point)
 fort, (adj = loud) *for-*
tay
 foyer *fwoi-yay*
 fragile *fray-ile*
 franchise *fran-chyz*
 freemason *free-may-sn*
 frequent (verb) *fre-*
kwent, (adj) *free-*
kwent

frigate *frig-at*
 froward *froh-ard*
 fuchsia *few-sha*
 funambulist *few-nam-*
bew-list
 funereal *few-nee-rī-al*
 fungi *fun-jy*
 furore *few-roh-rī*
 futile *few-tile*

Gaberdine *gab-er*
deen
 gala *gay-la*
 gallant (adj = brave)
gal-ant, (adj = atten-
 tive to women) *gal-*
lant, (noun and verb)
gab-lant
 ganglion *gang-gli-on*
 gape *gayp*
 garage* *gar-ij*
 garish *gayr-ish*
 gaseous *gay-sī-us*
 gaunt *gawnt*
 gauntlet *gawnt-let*
 gazebo *gaz-ee-boh*
 gendarme *zhon-darm*
 genealogy *jeen-ī-al-o-jī*
 genre *zhonr*
 genuine *jen-ew-in*
 germane *jer-mayn*
 gerrymander *ger-ī-*
man-der (not *jer-*)
 geyser *gay-zer*

ghoul *gool*
 gibber -ish *jib - er, gib-
 er-ish*
 gibbous *gib-us*
 gimbals *jim-bls*
 glacier *glas-i-er*
 gladiolus* *glad-i-oh-lus*
 glue *gloo*
 glycerine *gliss-er-in*
 golf *golf*
 gooseberry *gooz-ber-i*
 gouge *gowj*
 greasy *gree-zı*
 guillemot *gil-i-mot*
 guillotine *gil-oh-teen*
 gynaecology *jy-ne-col-
 o-ji*
 gyrate *jy-rate*

Hagio -cracy, -graphy
hag-i-ok-rası, -gra-fi
 halfpenny *hay-pen-i*
 halibut *hal-i-but*
 handkerchief *hang-ker-
 chif*
 hangar *hang-gar*
 harem *hayr-em* (only
 W & N give *har-
 eem*)
 haricot *har-i-koh*
 hasten *hay-sn*
 haunt *hawnt*
 hedonism *hee-don-izm*

hegemony* *hej-i-mon-i*
 (The consulted dic-
 tionaries give dif-
 ferent first prefs, but
 the majority give this
 form either as their
 first or second pref)
 hegira *hej-i-ra*
 heinous *hay-nus*
 hellebore *hel-e-bor*
 Hellenic *hel-leen-ik*
 herb *herb*
 Herculean *her-kew-li-
 an*
 hereditament *her-ed-
 it-a-ment*
 heterogeneity *het-er-
 o-gen-ee-it-i*
 hiatus *hy-ay-tus*
 hilarious, hilarity *hil-
 ayr-i-us, hil-lar-it-i*
 Himalayas *him-awl-
 ay-az*
 homoeopathic *hoh-mı-
 oh-path-ik*
 homogeneity *hom-oh-
 jen-ee-it-i*
 hosiery *hoh-zher-i*
 hospitable *hos-pı*-abl*
 hostile *hos-tile*
 hovel *hovl*
 hover *hov-er*
 Huguenot *hew-gen-ot*
 hum- In words begin.

MISPRONOUNCED WORDS

ning thus (e g humid,
humiliate, humour) the
h- should be sounded
e g *hew*-mor, not *yew*-
mor
hydrangea* *hy-drayn*-
jia
hygiene* *hy-jī-een*
hygienic* *hy-jī-en-ik*
hypochondria *hy-poh*-
kon-dri-a
hypotenuse *hy-pot-1-*
newz
hypothesis *hy-poth-1-sis*
Ibid *ib-id*
ideographic *id-1-oh*-
graf-ik
ideology *eye-di-ol-oh-jī*
idyll *eye-dil*
illustrate *il-lus-trayt*
illustrative *il-lus-tra*-
tiv
illustrator *il-lus-tray*-
tor
imbecile *im-bi-seel*
implacable *im-play*-
kabl
improvisation* *im*-
prov-ize-ay-shun
improvise* *im-proh*-
vize
impugn -able *im-pewn*,
-abl

incense (verb=to an-
ger) *in-sens*, (noun)
in-sens
incentive *in-sen-tiv*
inchoate* *in-koh-ayt*
incomparable *in-kom*-
par-abl
incondite *in-kon-dit*
inculcate *in-kul-kayt*
inculpate *in-kul-payt*
indecorous *in-dek-ohr*-
us
indicatory *in-dik-ayt*-
or-1
indictable *in-dy-tabl*
indisputable *in-dis*-
pew-tabl
indissoluble *in-dis-sol*-
ubl
inexorable *in-eks-or-abl*
inexplicable *in-eks*-
plik-abl
inexpugnable *in-ex*-
pug-nabl
inextricable *in-eks*-
trik-abl
infantile *in-fan-tyl*
inferable *in-fer-abl*
infinite *in-fi-nit*
inhospitable *in-hos*-
pit-abl
inlaid *in-laid*
inlay (verb) *in-lay*,
(noun) *lay-in*

innate <i>in-nayt</i>	invalid (sick person) <i>in-</i> <i>va-leed</i> , (adj = void), <i>in-val-id</i> , (verb) <i>in-va-</i> <i>leed</i>
inopportune <i>in-op-por-</i> <i>tewn</i>	inveigle <i>in-vee-gl</i>
inquiry <i>in-kwy-ri</i>	inventory <i>in-ven-tor-i</i>
insignia <i>in-sig-ni-a</i>	iodine <i>eye-oh-dyn</i>
insouciance <i>in-soo-si-</i> <i>ans</i>	irascible* <i>ir-rass-ibl</i>
inspiratory <i>in-spy-ra-</i> <i>tor-i</i>	irate <i>eye-rayt</i>
inspissate <i>ins-p's-ayt</i>	iron <i>eye-urn</i>
insult (verb) <i>in-sult</i> , (noun) <i>in-sult</i>	irony <i>eye-ron-i</i>
interdict (verb) <i>in-ter-</i> <i>dikt</i> , (noun) <i>in-ter-</i> <i>dikt</i>	irreconcilable* <i>ir-rek-</i> <i>on-sy-labl</i>
interlocutor <i>in-ter-lok-</i> <i>u-tor</i>	irrefragable <i>ir-ref-raj-</i> <i>abl</i>
internecine <i>in-ter-nee-</i> <i>syn</i>	irrefutable* <i>ir-re-few-</i> <i>tabl</i>
interpellate* <i>in-ter-pel-</i> <i>ayt</i>	irremediable <i>ir-re-mee-</i> <i>di-abl</i>
interpellation <i>in-ter-</i> <i>pel-ay-shun</i>	irreparable <i>ir-rep-ar-abl</i>
interpolate <i>in-ter-pol-</i> <i>ayt</i>	irrevocable <i>ir-rev-o-h-</i> <i>kabl</i>
interstice <i>in-ter-stis</i>	isinglass <i>eye-zing-glahs</i>
interstitial <i>in-ter-stishl</i>	Islam* <i>iz-lam</i>
intest-ine, -inal <i>in-test-</i> <i>in, -in-al</i>	isolate <i>eye-soh-layt</i>
intricacy <i>in-trik-as-i</i>	isthmus* <i>ist-mus</i>
intrigue (verbandnoun) <i>in-treeg</i>	itinerary <i>eye-tin-er-ar-i</i>
introit <i>in-troh-it</i>	J aundice* <i>jon-dis</i>
inundate <i>in-un-dayt</i>	jaunt <i>jawnt</i>
	jean <i>jayn</i>
	jejune <i>je-jewon</i>
	jewellery <i>jew-el-ri</i>
	jocund <i>jok-und</i>

MISPRONOUNCED WORDS

jowl *joul*
 jugular* *jug-ew-lar*
 justifica-tive, -tory *jus-ti-fik-ay-tiv, -tor-i*
 jute *joot*
 juvenile *joo-ve-nyl*

Kiln* *kiln*
 kismet *kis-met*
 kitchen *kit-chin*
 knoll *nohl*
 knout *nowt*
 knowledge *nol-ij*
 Koran *ko-rah*

Laboratory *lab-or-a-tor-i*
 labyrinthine *lab-i-rin-thyn*
 laissez faire *lay-say fayr*
 lamentable *lam-en-tabl*
 landau *lan-daw*
 landscape *land-skayp*
 lapis lazuli *lap-is laz-ew-ly*
 largess *lar-jes*
 larynx *lar-inks*
 laudanum *lod'n-um*
 launch* *lawnsh*
 laundry* *lawn-dri*
 laureate *law-ri-at*
 leeward* *lew-ard*

legend *lej-end*
 leisure *lezh-er*
 leonine *lee-oh-nyn*
 lenient *leen-yent*
 lenity *len-it-i*
 lese majesty *leez maj-es-ti*
 levee (reception) *lev-i, (embankment) le-vee*
 libertine* *lib-er-tin*
 lichen *ly-ken*
 lien *lee-en*
 limousine* *lim-oo-zeen*
 lingerie *lahnzh-ri*
 litigious *li-ty-us*
 livelong *lv-long*
 loathe *lohth (th voiced)*
 loll *lol*
 luxurious *lugs-ew-ri-us*
 luxury *luk-shu-ri*

Mademoiselle* *mad-ma-zel*
 maelstrom *mayl-strom*
 magnesia* *mag-nee-she-a*
 maladroit* *mal-a-droyt*
 malefactor *mal-e-fac-tor*
 mall *mawl*
 maniacal *man-ny-ak-al*
 maraschino *ma-ra-skee-noh*

margarine *mar-gar-een*
 marital *mar-it-al*
 maritime *mar-i-tym*
 matriarch *may-tri-ark*
 matricide *may-tri-syd*
 matrix *may-triks*
 matutinal *mat-ew-ty-nal*
 mauve *mohv*
 medicament *med-ik-a-ment*
 medicine *med-s'n*
 medieval *med-i-ee-val*
 mediocre *mee-di-oh-ker*
 meerschaum *meer-shum*
 megrim *mee-grim*
 melodrama *mel-oh-drah-ma*
 memoir *mem-war*
 menagerie *men-aj-er-i*
 message *mess-wej*
 metallurgy* *met-tal-ur-j1*
 metamorphosis *met-a-mor-foh-sis*
 mezzanine *mex-an-een*
 mezzotint *med-zoh-tint*
 microscop-*py, -pist my-cros-ko-pi, -pist*
 midwife *mid-wyf*
 midwifery* *mid-wif-ri*
 mien *meen*
 migraine *mee-grayn*
 milch *mulsh*

mimetic *my-met-ik*
 minaret *min-a-ret*
 minute (adj) *my-newt*
 mirage *mi-rahzh*
 misanthrope *mis-an-throhp*
 miscellany* *mis-el-an-i*
 mischievous *mis-chiv-us*
 misconstrue* *mis-kon-strew*
 misogamy* *my-sog-am-i*
 misogynist *my-soj-i-nist*
 mistleto *misl-toh*
 mobile *moh-by1*
 mobilization *moh-bil-y-zay-shun*
 mocha *moh-ka*
 molecule *mol-i-kewl*
 molybdenum* *mol-ib-dee-num*
 mongrel *mun-grel*
 morale *mor-ahl*
 morphine *mor-feen*
 moron *moh-ron*
 mourn *mohrn*
 moustache *mus-tash*
 myopia *my-ohp-ya*
 myopic *my-op-ik*

Nadir *nay-dir*
 naiad *ny-ad*
 naive, naivety *Fowler*

MISPRONOUNCED WORDS

describes as "curious and regrettable" the slow headway these forms are making against the French *naïve* and *naïveté* (nah *eev*, nah-*eev*-tay) All the consulted dictionaries give the Fr pron first, but Fowler makes such a good case that the forms recommended here are nayv and nayv-ti

naphtha naf-tha (*th* unv)

nascent nass-ent

nausea naw-se-a

nauseous naw-si-us

negligé(e) neg-li-zhay

negotiation ne-goh-shi-ay-shun

negus nee-gus

neither ny-ther

Nemesis nem-ee-sis

nephew nev-ew

nepotism* nep-o-tizm

nesci -ence, -ent nes-i-ens, -ent

nestle ness-l

neuralgia new-ral-ji-a

neurasthenia new-ras-theen-ya

Nicene* ny-seen

nicety ny-set-i

nicotine* nk-oh-teen

nihilist* ny-il-ist

nisi ny-sy

noblesse oblige noh-*bless* oh-*bleesh*

nomad nom-ad

nomenclature noh-men-clayt-sheer

nonage noh-nij

nonagenarian non-aj-en-ay-ri-an

nonchal-ance, -ant non-sha-lans, -lant

nondescript non-des-kript

none nun

nonpareil non-par-el

non sequitur non sek-wit-ur

noose* noos

nouveau riche noo-voh reesh

notoriety noh-tor-y-et-i

novel nov-l

novice nov-is

novitiate noh-vish-i-ayt

noxious nok-shus

nuance new-ahns

nude newd

nugatory new-gat-or-i

numismat -ic, -ist new-miz-mat-ik, new-miz-mat-ist

nuncio nun-shioh

O asis oh-ay-sis	odontology oh-don-tol-o-jī
obduracy, obdurate ob-dew-ra-si, ob-dew-rayt	Odyssey od-is-i
obeisance oh-bay-sans	oecumenical SEE ecumenical
obesity oh-bee-sit-i	often* off'n (not of-ten)
obfuscate ob-fus-kayt	ogreish oh-ger-ish
obiter dicta ob-it-er dik-ta	olden ohl-den
object (verb) ob-jekt, (noun) ob-jekt	olfactory ol-fak-tor-i
objurgate ob-jur-gayt	omega oh-meg-a
oblate (priest) ob-layt, (spheroid) ob-layt	omelet om-lit
oblique oh-bleek	ominous om-in-us
obloquy ob-loh-kwi	omnisci -ence, -ent om-nish-ens, -ent
obscenity ob-sen-it-i	onerous on-er-us
obscurant -ism, -ist ob-skew-rant, -izm, -ist	onomatopoeia on-oh-mat-oh-pee-a
obsequies ob-se-kwi-z	onyx* on-iks
obsequious ob-see-kwi-us	oolite oh-o-lyt
obverse ob-vers	opacity oh-pass-it-i
occipital ok-sip-it-al	ophthalmic of-thal-mik
occiput ok-si-put	opportune op-por-tewn
occult -ism, -ist o-kult, -ism, ist	oppugn op-pewn
ocelot oh-si-lot	opus op-us
octavo ok-tay-voh	opuscule oh-pus-kewl
octopus ok-to-pus	orange or-inj
odeon oh-dee-on	orang-outang aw-rang oo-tang (bitter spelt orang-utan, pron in Malaya aw-rang-oo-tan)
odious, odium oh-di-us, oh-di-um	orches -tra, -tral or-kes-tra, or-kes-tral
	ordeal or-dee-al

MISPRONOUNCED WORDS

organization or-gan-ny-
zay-shun

orgiastic or-jī-as-tik

orgy or-jī

orient oh-rī-ent

orientate oh-rī-en-tayt

orison or-iz-un

ormolu or-mo-loo

orotund oh-ro-tund

orthoepy* or-thoh-ee-pī
(th unv)

orthopaedic or-thoh-
pee-dik (th unv)

orthopaedy or-thoh-pee-
dī (th unv)

osteopath -ist, -y os-te-
oh-path, os-te-op-ath-
ist, -y (th unv)

ostler os-ler

ostracize os-tra-size

otiose oh-shī-ohs

oust owst

oviparous oh-vīp-ār-us

oxygenate ok-sij-en-ayt

ozone oh-zohn

Pachydermatous pak-
ī-der-mat-us [tor-ī

pacificatory pa-sīf-ik-a-

padre pah-dray

pageant -ry paj-nt, -rī

pagin -al, ate, -ation,
paj-in-al, -ayt, paj-in-
ay-shun

palliasse SEE palliasse

palanquin pal-an-keen

palatine pal-a-tyn

palaver pa-lah-ver

palette pal-et

palfrey pol-fri

palliasse pal-yas

palliative pal-le-a-tiv

pall-mall pel-mel

palmist pah-mist

panegyric -al pan-ī-jīr-
ik, -al

panegyryze pan-ej-ī-rize

panorama pan-oh-rah-
ma

pantheon* panth-ī-on

papa pa-pah

papyrus pa-py-rus

paradigm par-a-dym

paradigmatic pa - ra -
dig-mat-ik

paraffin pa-ra-fin

parasol pa-ra-sol

paregoric pa-rī-gor-ik

parenchyma pa - reng -
kī-ma

parentage payr-en-tij

parenthesis pa-ren-thī-
sis (th unv)

paresis pa-rī-sis

pariah par-ī-a

pari passu pay-rī pass-ew

parliament -arian -ary
par-li-ment, li-ment-
ayr-yan, -li-ment ar-ī

parquet* *par-ket*
 partisan* *par-ti-zan*
 pasha* *pah-sha* '
 passe-partout *pas-par-too*
 pastel *pas-tel*
 pastille *pas-teel*
 pastor *pah-ster*
 pâté de foie gras *pat-ay de fwaw grah*
 patent-ee *pay-tent, pay-tent-ee*
 pathos *pay-thos (th unv)*
 patina *pat-in-a*
 patriot-ism, -ic *pay-tri-ot, -ism, pay-tri-ot-ic*
 patron-age *pay-trun, pat-ron-ij* *
 patronize *pat-ron-ize*
 paunch *pawnch*
 pedagogue-ic(al), -y* *ped-a-gog-ikl, ped-a-gog-i*
 pedantry *ped-ant-ri*
 pedometer *ped-om-e-ter*
 pejorative *pee-jor-a-tiv*
 penalize *pee-nal-ize*
 penchant *pon-shon(g)*
 pencil *pen-sl*
 pension (boarding-house) *pons-yon*
 peremptor-iness, -y *per-emp-tur-i-ness, -y*
 perfect (verb) *per-fekt*,
 (adj) *per-fekt*

perfume (verb) *per-fewm*, (noun) *per-fewm*
 perfunctory *per-funk-tor-i*
 perimeter *per-im-i-ter*
 periphery *per-if-er-i*
 periphrasis *per-if-ra-sis*
 periphrastic *per-i-fras-tik*
 peritoneum *per-it-on-ee-um*
 permit (verb) *per-mit*,
 (noun) *per-mit*
 persiflage* *per-si-flahzh*
 persist *per-sist*
 personnel *per-son-el*
 pestle *pes-l*
 petard *pet-ard*
 petrol *pet-rol*
 pewit *pee-wit*
 phaeton *fay(i)-tn*
 phalanx *fal-anks*
 pharmaceutical *far-ma-sew-tik-al*
 pharmacist *far-ma-sist*
 pharmacopœia *far-ma-ko-pee-a*
 pharyngeal *far-in-je-al*
 pharynx *far-inks*
 phenacetin *fen-nas-i-tin*
 phenol *fee-nol*
 phenyl *fee-nil*

MISPRONOUNCED WORDS

philander fil-*an*-der
 philately fil-*at*-e-lī
 Philistine* fil-*is*-tīn
 phlegmatic fleg-*mat*-ik
 phlogiston flo-*jus*-ton
 photochromy foh-*toh*-
 kroh-mī
 photogravure foh-*toh*-
 grav-*ewr*
 phthisic tiz-ik
 phthisis thy-*sis* (*th* unv)
 physicist fiz-*is*-ist
 physiognomy* fiz-*i*-
 on-o-mī
 pianist pee-*an*-ist
 pibroch pee-*brokh*
 picric pik-rik
 picture pik-*tsher*
 pilaster pil-*as*-ter
 pince-nez pahns-*nay*
 piquancy peek-*an*-sī
 piquant peek-*ant*
 pizzicato pit-*sik*-ah-*toh*
 placable play-*kab*-l
 placard plak-*ard*
 placate* pla-*kayt*
 plagiarism play-*j*(1)ar-
 ism
 plaid plad
 plat plat
 plaque plahk
 plebeian plee-*bee*-an
 plebiscite pleb-*i*-sit
 plenary plee-*nar*-i

plenitude plen-*i*-tewd
 plethor -a, -ic pleth-*o*-ra,
 pleth-*or*-ik (*th* unv)
 plover pluv-*er*
 podophyllin pod-*o*-fil-
 in
 poetaster* poh-*et*-tay-
 ster
 poignant poy-*nant*
 polka* pol-*ka*
 polygamist po-*lg*-am-
 ist
 polygamy po-*lg*-am-*i*
 pomade po-*mahd*
 pomatum po-*mah*-tum
 pomegranate pom-*gran*-
 ayt
 pommel puml
 pontifical pon-*tif*-ik-al
 porcelain* pors-*lin*
 pork pohrk
 porpoise por-*pus*
 portentous por-*ten*-tus
 portrait port-*rit*
 postscript poh-*script*
 poste-restante pohst-
 res-*tahnt*
 posthumous pos-*tew*-
 mus
 postpone pohst-*pohn*
 potentate poh-*ten*-tayt
 poteen, potheen pot-*een*
 pot pourri* poh-*poo*-ree
 pour pohr (not poor)

prebend -ary <i>preb-end</i> , -ar-i	princess prin- <i>ses</i> , when followed by a name, <i>prin-ses</i>
precedence* <i>pres-sed-</i> ens	pristine <i>pris-teen</i>
précis <i>pray-see</i>	privacy <i>pry-vas-i</i>
precocity <i>pre-cos-it-i</i>	probity <i>prob-it-i</i>
predecessor <i>pre-di-ses-</i> or	proboscis <i>proh-boh-sis</i>
predilection <i>pre-di-lek-</i> shun	proceed (verb) <i>proh-</i> <i>seed</i> , proceeds (noun) <i>proh-seeds</i>
preface <i>pref-as</i>	process <i>proh-ses</i>
preferable <i>pref-er-abl</i>	procurator <i>prok-u-ray-</i> tor
prefix (verb) <i>pre-fix</i> , (noun) <i>pre-fix</i>	produce (verb) <i>proh-</i> <i>dews</i> , (noun) <i>prod-ews</i>
prelate <i>prel-at</i>	profile <i>proh-feel</i>
prelude <i>prel-ewd</i>	prognathous <i>prog-na-</i> thus (<i>th unv</i>)
premature* <i>prem-a-tewr</i>	progress (verb) <i>proh-</i> <i>gress</i> , (noun) <i>proh-</i> <i>gress</i>
premier <i>prem-i-er</i>	prohibition <i>proh-hib-</i> <i>ishn</i>
premise (verb) <i>pre-mize</i> , (noun) <i>prem-is</i>	project (verb) <i>proh-jekt</i> , (noun) <i>proj-ekt</i>
presage (verb) <i>pre-sayj</i> , (noun) <i>pres-ij</i>	projectile <i>proh-jek-tyl</i>
prescience <i>presh-i-ens</i>	proletarian <i>proh-let-</i> <i>tayr-i-an</i>
present (verb) <i>pre-</i> <i>zent</i> , (noun and adj) <i>prez-nt</i>	prolix <i>proh-lik</i> s
prestige <i>pres-teezh</i>	prologue <i>proh-log</i>
pretext (verb) <i>pri-tekst</i> , (noun) <i>pree-tekst</i>	promenade <i>prom-i-</i> <i>nahd</i>
prima donna <i>pree-</i> <i>mah don-a</i>	promissory <i>prom-is-or-i</i>
prima facie <i>pry-mah</i> <i>fay-shi-ee</i>	
primer <i>prim-er</i>	

MISPRONOUNCED WORDS

promulgate *prom-ul-gayt*

pronunciation *pro-nun-si-ay-shun*

propagan-da, -dist *prop-a-gan da, -dist*

pro rata *proh rah-ta*

prosody *pros-o-di*

prospect (verb) *pros-pekt,* (noun) *pros-pekt*

protasis *prot-a-sis*

protean *proh-ti-an*

protégé *prot-ay-zhay*

protest (verb) *proh-test,* (noun) *pro-test*

protocol *proh-to-kol*

psalm -ist, -ody, *sahm-ist, -o-di*

psychia -trist, -try *sy-ky-a-trist, -tri*

ptomaine *toh-mayn*

publicist *pub-lis-ist*

puerile *pew-er-ile*

puerperal *pew-er-per-al*

puisne *pew-ni*

puissance *pew-i-s'ns*

pulsate *pul-sayt*

pumice *pum-mis*

purport (verb) *per-pohrt,* (noun) *per-port*

purposive *per-pos-iv*

pursuit *per-sewt*

pursuivant *per-swiv-ant*

putative *pew-ta-tiv*

pyjamas *pi-jah-maz*

pyrites *pi-ry-teez*

python *py-thon (th unv)*

Quadriga *kwod-ry-ga*

quadrille *ka-dril*

quadruple *kwod-roo-pl*

quagmire *kwag-mire*

quasi *kway-zi*

qualm *kwahm*

quandary *kwon-dar-i*

quarantine *kwor-an-teen*

quash *kwosh*

quassia* *kwosh-i-a*

quatrefoil *kat-re-foyl*

quatorzain *kat-or-zayn*

queue *kew*

quinine *kwi-neen*

Quirinal *kwi-ri-nal*

quoit *koyt*

quorum *kwoh-rum*

Rabies *ray-bi-eez*

raconteur *rak-on-ter*

ragout *ra-goo*

raillery *rayl-er-i*

raison d'être *ray-son(g) daytr*

raj *rahj*

rajah *rah-ja*

rampage *ram-payj*

rampant *ram-pant*
 rapine *rap-in*
 rapprochement *ra -
prosh-mon(g)*
 rara avis *rayr-a ay-vis*
 rarefaction *rayr-i-fac-
shun*
 rarefy *rayr-i-fy*
 raspberry *rahz-ber-i*
 ratiocinate *rat-i-os-in-
nayt*
 ration *rash'n*
 rationale *rash-on-ah-li*
 rebate* (noun) *ree-bate*
 recess *re-ses*
 recidivist *re-sid-iv-ist*
 recipe *res-ip-i*
 recognizance* *re-cog-
niz-ans*
 recondite *rek-on-dite*
 reconnaissance *re-con-
is-ans*
 record (verb) *re-kord*,
 (noun) *rek-ord*
 recoup *re-koop*
 recreate (to refresh) *rek-
ri-ayt*, (to create
 afresh) *ree-kri-ayt*
 recusant *rek-ew-zant*
 redivivus *red-i-vy-vus*
 referable *ref-er-abl*
 refragable *ref-ra-ja-bl*
 refuse (verb) *re-fewz*,
 (noun) *ref-ews*

refutable *ref-ew-tabl*
 régime *ray-zheem*
 regina *re-ji-na*
 registrar* *rej-is-trar*
 regress (verb) *re-gres*,
 (noun) *ree-gres*
 relay (noun and verb)
ri-lay, (verb=to lay
 again) *ree-lay*
 reliquary *rel-ik-war-i*
 remediable *re-mee-di-abl*
 renaissance *re-nay-sans*
 rendez-vous *ron - day-
voo*
 renege *ren-eej*
 reparable *rep-ar-abl*
 repartee *rep-ar-tee*
 repertory *rep-er-tor-i*
 repetitive *re-pet-it-iv*
 replica *rep-lik-a*
 reprimand *rep-ri-mahnd*
 reputable *rep-ew-tabl*
 requiem *rek-qwi-em*
 requisite *rek-kwiz-it*
 reredos *reer-dos*
 research (verb and
 noun) *re-serch*
 reservoir *rez-er-vwahr*
 respirator -y *res-pi-ray-
tor*, *res-py-ra tor-i*
 respite -d *res-pit*, -id
 restaurant* *res-ter-on*
 restorative *res-tor-a-tiv*
 retail (verb) *re-tayl*;

MISPRONOUNCED WORDS

(noun and adj) *ree-tayl*

reticence *ret-i-sens*

retina *ret-i-na*

retrograde *ret-troh-grayd*

retrogression *ree-troh-greshn*

retrospect *ret-ros-pekt*

reveille *re-vel-i*

revocable *rev-o-kabl*

Reynard *ren-ard*

ribald *rib-ald*

ricochet* *rik-o-shay*

righteous *ry-tshus*

rinderpest *rin-der-pest*

riparian *ry-payr-i-an*

risqué *rees-kay*

rococo *roh-koh-koh*

rodomontade *rod-o-mon-tayd*

romance (verb and noun) *roh-mans*

romany *rom-an-i*

room (*oo* as in *wool*)

roseate *roh-zí-ayt*

rosemary *roh-z-mar-i*

route root

ruffian *ruf-yan*

rule rool

rural *roo-ral*

rustle *rus'l*

Sabretache *say-ber-tash*

saccharin *sak-ar-in*

saccharine (adj) *sak-ar-yn*

sacerdotal *sas-er-doh-tal*

sachet *sash-ay*

sacrilege *sak-ril-ij*

sacrilegious* *sak-ril-ij-us*

sacristan *sak-ris-tan*

saga *sah-ga*

saint saynt, (followed by a name) *s'nt*

salicyl -ate, -ic *sal-ís-i-layt*, *sal-i-sl-ik*

saline *say-lyn*

salivary *sal-i-var-i*

salor* *sal-on*

salutary *sal-yew-tar-i*

salute *sa-loot*

salve (ointment) *sahv*, (verb=to save) *salv*

salver *sal-ver*

sal volatile *sal vo-lat-i-li*

sang-froid *sahn-frowah*

sapient *say-pi-ent*

sarcopha -gus, -gi *sar-kof-a-gus*, -gy

sardine (fish) *sar-deen*, (precious stone) *sar-dyn*

sardonic *sar-don-ik*

sardonyx *sar-don-iks*

satiāte <i>say-she-ayt</i>	scorbutic <i>scor-bew-tik</i>
satiety <i>sat-ty-i-ti</i>	scourge <i>skerj</i>
satir -ist, -ize <i>sat-i-rist,</i> -rize	sculpture <i>skulp-chur</i>
satrap* <i>say-trap</i>	seamstress <i>sem-stress</i>
saturnine <i>sat-er-nyn</i>	séance <i>say-ahns</i>
satyr <i>sat-er</i>	Seidlitz <i>sed-litz</i>
saunter <i>sawn-ter</i>	seigneur <i>sayn-yer</i>
sausage <i>sos-ij</i>	seine (fishing net) <i>sayn</i>
savant <i>sav-on(g)</i>	sies -mic, -mograph <i>sys-</i> <i>mik, -mo-graph, seis-</i>
savoir-faire <i>s a v - w a r</i> <i>fayr</i>	mographer <i>syz-mog-</i> <i>ra-fer</i>
says <i>sez</i>	seizin, seisin (1) <i>seez-in</i> (2) <i>sy-zin</i>
scabies <i>skay-bi-eez</i>	selenium <i>se-lee-ni-um</i>
scabious <i>skay-bi-us</i>	seminary <i>sem-in-ar-i</i>
scallop <i>skol-up</i>	senescent <i>sen-ess-n't</i>
scaramouch <i>s k a r - a -</i> <i>mowch</i> *	seneschal <i>sen-esh'l</i>
scenario <i>shay-nah-ri-o</i>	senile <i>see-nyl</i>
scenic <i>see-nik</i>	sentient* <i>sen-sh'nt</i>
schedule <i>shed-ewl</i>	separatist <i>sep-ar-a-tist</i>
scherzo <i>skert-so</i>	sepulture <i>sep-ul-chur</i>
schism -atic <i>siz-m, siz-</i> <i>mat-ik</i>	seques -trate -tration <i>si-</i> <i>kwes-trayt, si-kwes-</i> <i>tray-shun</i>
schist <i>shist</i>	seraglio <i>ser-ahl-yo</i>
schottische <i>shot-eesh</i>	seriatim <i>see-ri-ay-tim</i>
scimitar <i>sim-i-tar</i>	series <i>see-reez</i>
scintilla <i>sin-til-a</i>	servile <i>ser-vile</i>
scintillate <i>sin-til-ayt</i>	sesame <i>ses-a-mi</i>
scion <i>sy-un</i>	sheik * <i>sheek</i>
schirr -us -ous <i>sir-rus</i>	shellac <i>shel-ak</i>
scission <i>sish-un</i>	shortcoming <i>short-kum-</i> <i>ing</i>
sclerosis <i>sklee-roh-sis</i>	
scone <i>skon</i>	

MISPRONOUNCED WORDS

sidereal sy-deer-i-al
 signor -a seen-yor, seen-yohr-a
 Sikh seek
 silhouette sil-oo-et
 simile sim-i-li
 simony* sim-on-i
 simoom sim-oom
 sinecure sy-ni-kewr
 sine die sy-ni dy-ee
 sinister sin-is-ter
 Sistine sis-tyn
 ski shee
 slake slayk
 sleight slite
 sloth slohth
 slough (verb=to cast off, noun=cast-off skin) sluff, (noun=swamp) slou
 sloven-ly sluv-'n, -li
 sluice sloos
 smallpox smawol-poks
 sobriquet soh-bri-kay
 socialite soh-shal-ite
 sociology soh si-ol-o-ji
 soften sof'n
 soirée swah-ray
 sojourn* soj-urn
 solace sol-as
 solder sol-der
 soldier sohl-er
 solecism sol-i-sism
 solemn sol-em

solstice sol-stis
 soluble sol-ewbl
 sombre som-ber
 sombrero som-brayr-oh
 sonata son-ah-ta
 sonorous son-ohr-us
 soot (oo as in foot)
 sophist sof-ist
 soporific sop-or-uf-ik
 sotto voce sot-oh voh-chay
 soufflé soo-flay
 sough* suf
 souse sous
 souvenir soo-ven-eer
 sovereign sov-rin
 spatial spay-shl
 species spee-sheez
 spectroscopy spec-tros-cop-i
 speculative spec-u-lat-iv
 spermaceti* sper-ma-see-ti
 spheroid sfeer-oyd
 spinach spin-ij
 spinet spin-et
 spinneret spin-er-et
 spontaneity spon-tan-ee-it-i
 springy spring-i
 squirrel skw-rel
 stabilize stay-bil-ize
 staccato stak-kah-toh
 stalactite* stal-ak-tite

stalagmite *stal-ag-mite*
 starboard *star-berd*
 statistician *stat-is-tish'n*
 status quo *stay-tus kwoh*
 staunch *stawnch*
 stearin, stearic *stee-ar-in, stee-ar-ik*
 stereotype* *steer-e-oh-typ*
 sterile *ster-ile*
 stern (of a boat) *stern*
 stertorous *ster-tor-us*
 stigmata *stig ma ta*
 stiletto *stil-let-toh*
 stipend *-iary sty-pend, sty-pen-di-ar-i*
 stirrup *sti-rup*
 stiver *sty-ver*
 stomach *-er, -ic stum-ak, stum-ak-er, stoh-mak-ik*
 strat-a -um *stray-ta, -um*
 strategic *-al strat-ey-ik, -al*
 strophe *stroh-fi*
 strychnine* *strik-neen*
 studding-sail *stun-s'l*
 suave, suavity *swayv, swav-it-i*
 subaltern *sub-l-tern*
 subject (verb) *sub-jekt,*
 (noun) *sub-jekt*

subpoena *sub-pee-na*
 subsidence *sub-si-dens*
 substantival, substan-
 tively *sub-stan-ty-val, sub-stan-tiv-li*
 substratum *sub-stray-tum*
 subtle *sut'l*
 succinct *suk-sinct*
 succumb *suk-kum*
 suede *swayd*
 suffragan *suf-rag-an*
 suffragist *suf-raj-ist*
 suicidal *sew-i-sy-dal*
 suite *sweet*
 sulphureous, sulphurous
sul-few-ri-us, sul-fu-rus
 sumach *sew-mak*
 sumptuous *sump-tew-us*
 sundae *sun-di*
 superficies *sew-per-fish-i-eez*
 superfluity *sew-per-flew-it-i*
 superfluous *sew-per-flew-us*
 supine *sew-pyn*
 suppliant *sup-li-ant*
 supposititious *sup-poz-i-tish-us*
 surreptitious *sur-rep-tish-us*
 surtout* *ser-too*

MISPRONOUNCED WORDS

surveillance *sur-vay-*
lans

survey (verb) *ser-vay*,
(noun) *sur-vay*

susurrous *sew-sur-rus*

suture *sew-cher*

svelte *svelt*

swap, swop *swop*

swastika *swas-tik-a* (not
swos-)

swath *swawth*

sycophant *sik-o-fant*

syllogism *sil-o-jism*

syncope *sing-koh-pi*

symposium *sim-poh-zi-*
um

synod *sin-od*

syringe *si-rinj*

syringotomy *si-rin-got-*
am-i

syrinx *si-ringks*

systole *sis-toh-li*

zyzygy *zi-zi-ji*

Tabard *tab-erd*

tableau *tab-loh*

table d'hôte *tah-bl doht*

tacet *tay-set*

tacit *tass-it*

talc *tal-k*

talisman *tal-iz-m'n*

tambour *tam-boor*

tantivy *tan-tiv-i*

tapir *tay-per*

tapis *ta-pee*

tarantula *ta-ran-tew-la*

tarpaulin *tar-paw-lin*

taunt *tawnt*

tedium *tee-di-um*

telepath -ic, -y *tel-i-*

path-ik, *tel-ep-a-thi*

telescope -ic -y *tel-es-*

kop-ik, *tel-es-kop-i*

temporarily *tem-po-rar-*
i-li

tenable *ten-abl*

tenace *ten-is*

tenet *tee-nit*

tercentenary *ter-cen-*
tee-nar-i

tergiversation *ter-jiv-*
er-say-shun

Terpsichorean *terps-i-*
koh-ree-an

terrain *ter-rayn*

testator *tes-tay-tor*

tetanus *tet-an-us*

tête-a-tête *tayt-a-tayt*

tetrarch* *tet-rark*

textile *tex-tyl*

threnody *three-nod-i*

threshold *thresh-old*

thyme *tym*

tiara *te-ah-ra*

tumbæ *tam-br*

tincture *tink-tsher*

tirade *ti-rayd*

tissue <i>tish-ew</i>	treatise <i>tree-tize</i>
Tokay <i>toh-kay</i>	trefoil <i>tree-foyl</i>
tomato <i>to-mah-toh</i>	trilogy <i>tril-o-jı</i>
topsail <i>topsl</i>	tripartite <i>try-par-tyt</i>
torchon <i>tor-shon</i>	triplane <i>try-playn</i>
toreador <i>tor-i-a-dohr</i>	tripod <i>try-pod</i>
torment (verb) <i>tor-ment</i> ,	tripos <i>try-pos</i>
(noun) <i>tor-ment</i>	tritych <i>trip-tik</i>
tornado <i>tor-nay-doh</i>	trisyll -able, -abic <i>tri-</i>
tortoise <i>tor-tus</i>	<i>sıl-abl</i> , <i>tri-sıl-ab-ık</i>
toucan <i>too-kahn</i>	triumvir <i>try-um-ver</i>
tournament <i>toor-na-</i>	triune <i>try-ewn</i>
<i>ment</i>	truculent <i>truk-ew-lent</i>
tourniquet <i>toor-nı-ket</i>	tryst* <i>try-st</i>
tout court <i>too koor</i>	turbine <i>ter-bin</i>
tout ensemble <i>toot on-</i>	turgid <i>ter-jıd</i>
<i>sawm-bl</i>	turquoise <i>tur-koyz</i>
towards <i>to-wawdzə</i>	tympanum <i>tim-pan-um</i>
trachea <i>trak-ee-a</i>	typographer <i>ty-pog-rafer</i>
tracheotomy <i>trak-i-ot-</i>	
<i>oh-mı</i>	
trachoma <i>trak-oh-ma</i>	Ukase <i>yew-kayz</i>
tragacanth <i>trag-a-kanth</i>	ultimatum <i>ul-tı-may-</i>
tragedian <i>tra-jee-di-an</i>	<i>tum</i>
trait <i>tray</i>	ululation <i>yew-lew-lay-</i>
transient* <i>trahn-sı-ent</i>	<i>shun</i>
transition <i>tran-sızhn</i>	umbrage <i>um-brij</i>
transmigrate <i>trans-my-</i>	umlaut <i>oom-lowt</i>
<i>grayt</i>	unctuous <i>ungk-tew-us</i>
transparent <i>trans-payr-</i>	undulatory <i>un-dew-lay-</i>
<i>ent</i>	<i>tor-i</i>
transport (verb) <i>trans-</i>	unguent <i>un-gwent</i>
<i>pawrt</i> , (noun) <i>trans-</i>	urbanity <i>er-ban-it-i</i>
<i>po(r)t</i>	urethra <i>yew-ree-thra</i>

urinal *yew-rin-al*
 urine *yew-reen*
 usage *yewz-ij*
 used (to) *yewst*
 usury *yew-zhoo-ri*

Vaccine *vak-seen*
 vagary *va-gayr-i*
 vale (farewell) *vah-lee*
 valet *val-it*
 valise *val-ees*
 rapid *vap-id*
 varicocele *var-i-ko-seel*
 variegate *vayr-i-gayt*
 vase *vahz*
 vaseline *vas-i-leen*
 vaticinate *vat-is-in-ayt*
 vaudeville *vohd-vil*
 vaunt *vawnt*
 vehemen -ce, -t *vee -i -*
 mens, -ment
 vehicle *vee-ikl*
 vehicular *vi-luc-u-lar*
 veld *velt*
 venery *ven-er-i*
 venison *venz-'n*
 verbose, verbosity *ver-*
 bohs, *ver-bos-it-i*
 verdigris *ver-di-gris*
 verdure *verd-yer*
 vers libre *vayr lee-br*
 vertigo *ver-ti-goh*
 via *vy-a*
 viand *vy-and*

vibratory *vy-bra-tor-i*
 vicarious *vy-kayr-i-us*
 vicinity *vis-in-i-ti*
 vicissitude *vy-sis-i-tewd*
 victualler *vutl-er*
 vide *vy-di*
 videlicet* *vid-ee-lis-et*
 vignette *vin-yet*
 villain *vil-an*
 vin ordinaire *van or-*
 din-ayr
 vinous *vy-nus*
 viola (plant) *vy-oh-la*,
 (musical instr) *vi-oh-*
 la
 violin *vy-o-lin*
 violoncello *vy-o-lon-*
 chell-oh
 virago *vi-rah-goh*
 virile *vi-ryl*
 viru -lence, -lent *vi-rew-*
 lens, -lent
 visa *vee-za*
 visage *viz-ij*
 vis-a-vis *vee-za-vee*
 viscera *vis-er-a*
 viscid *vis-id*
 viscount *vy-cownt*
 vitiate *vish-i-ayt*
 vituperate *vy-tew-per*
 ayt
 vivacious *vy-vay-shus*
 vivacity *vy-vas-it-i*
 viva voce *vy-va voh-si*

viviparous vy-*vîp*-ar-us
 vivisect *vîv*-i-sekt
 vizier viz-*eer*
 volatile *vol*-a-tile
 vol-au-vent vol-o *h*-
 von(g)
 volte face vohlt *fas*
 vox dei voks *dee*-eye
 vox populi voks *pop*-ew-
 ly

Wagon-lit vag-on *lee*
 wainscot *wayn*-scot
 waistcoat *ways*-koht
 walrus *wol*-rus
 wapentake *wop*-en-tayk
 wassail *wos*-l
 Wednesday* *Wenz*-di
 Wesleyan *Wes*-li-an
 whale* wayl†

wigwam *wig*-wam
 wont wohnt
 worsted *woost*-ed (*oo* as
 in wool)

Year yeer
 yeast yeest
 yesterday *yes*-te-di
 yodel *yoh*-dl
 yogi *yoh*-gi
 yoicks yoyks

Zenith *zen*-ith
 zero *zee*-roh
 zodiacal *zoh*-dy-ak-al
 zoology *zoh*-ol-o-ji
 zoophyte *zoh*-o-fyt
 zouave *zoo*-ahv
 zymotic *zy*-mot-ik

† In most words beginning with *wh*, says the C O D,
 "the *h* is silent in ordinary modern usage, but the correct
 sound, = *hw*, is retained by the Scotch, Irish, Welsh and
 northern English, and by purists in pronunciation, as well
 as for the nonce in unfamiliar words or such as might be
 confused with commoner words having no *h* (*whet*, *why*) "

GLOSSARY OF LITERARY AND GRAMMATICAL TERMS

THIS list of technical terms is intended primarily for readers who want a means of ready reference less cumbersome than a grammar and more detailed than a dictionary. It contains, I hope, all the terms that ordinarily crop up in the study of English usage, and some that do not. These latter have been included for several reasons. One is that it seemed worth while to try to make the list as comprehensive as possible, another that, so far as I know, no such list is already available in popular form, and a third that even though the ordinary reader may find little practical use for them, they will serve to show him how profoundly the Greeks (who invented most of them) studied the use of words before our own civilization began.

A

absolute Standing apart from its customary construction with another word or words.
Adjective abs · *On, ye brave, who rush to glory.*
Adverb abs , one that modifies a whole sentence

Luckily *it did not rain again* Imperative abs
 The ghost—describe it as you will—then appeared
 Infinitive abs To think *that he could have done*
it! Nominative abs a noun or pronoun used
 with a participle to form an adverbial phrase
 independent of the rest of the sentence, e g
 The play having ended, *we all went home* A
 transitive verb is abs when it is used without an
 object, e g *The cup that cheers but not inebriates*
 abstract noun See NOUN

acatalectic The name given to a metre the
 last foot of which is complete Thus *We are/*
going, / they are / going is known as a trochaic
 dimeter acatalectic because each measure consists
 of two trochees, (q v) and *going* is a complete
 trochee If the last word had been the single-
 syllable *gone* (a cut-down trochee) the line would
 have been described as CATALECTIC, a word
 used to describe any imperfect foot

accent Rhythmical stress on single syllables
 in prosody Also the name given to certain
 marks (*grave* a , *acute* a , *circumflex* a , q v) used
 to indicate stress, pronunciation, etc

accidence That part of grammar which
 treats of inflections, or the different forms words
 can take

accusative See CASE

active voice See VOICE

acute accent. (')

adjective A word used with a noun or pronoun to describe it *Qualitative adj*, by far the largest class, denote the nature or quality of an object, e g *green, happy, big, French* *Quantitative adj*, denote quantity or indefinite number, e g *few, several, some, any* *Numeral adj*, denote the number of persons or objects indicated by the noun *One, two, three*, etc., are known as *cardinal numerals*, and *first, second, third*, etc., as *ordinal numerals* *Demonstrative adj*, point to the object indicated by the noun, e g *a, an, the, this, that, these, those, such*, etc *Distributive adj*, convey that what is said of a group of objects or persons applies to them individually, e g *either, every, each* Most *adj* admit of degrees of comparison, e g *green, greener, greenest*

adjective absolute See ABSOLUTE

adverb A word used to modify or qualify (i e to describe more fully) any part of speech other than a noun or pronoun Adverbs indicate time (*then, now, to-day*), place (*here, there, outside*), manner (*slowly, carefully, well*), number (*once, twice, singly*), degree (*very, so, quite*), reason (*consequently, therefore, thus*), assertion (*yes, no, aye*), and may also be interrogative (*When? Where? How? Why?*), or exclamatory (*How he laughed!*) Examples of usage *He ran* quickly (verb modified), *The girl was* very pretty (*adj*

modified), *She behaved quite rightly* (adv modified) Many adverbs are formed by adding -ly to adjectives, but an adj and adv may have the same form, e g *A fast car* (adj), *He ran fast* (adv) Adverbs, like adjectives, can be compared, e g *fast, faster, fastest* See PREPOSITION.

adverb absolute See ABSOLUTE

affix Either a prefix or suffix added to the stem or base of a word to modify its original meaning

alexandrine Verse with twelve syllables and six feet or stresses, e g

They love to steal a march, nor lightly risk the life

So called either after Alexandre Paris, a French poet, or from French poems on Alexander the Great written in this metre

allegory An imagined tale in which a moral or a truth is dramatically illustrated in action

alliteration The repetition of a stressed consonantal sound in closely successive words in order to intensify their meaning, e g *The most hot-headed and hard-hearted of prelates*, or, in verse, to give poetical effect to a line or passage

*The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free*

amphibology The wording of a sentence so that it may be capable of two interpretations, e.g. *Feed a cold and starve a fever*

amphibrach (pron *am-fi-brak*) An accented syllable preceded and followed by an unaccented, e.g. *un-worth-y*, *des-pair-ing* An amphibrachic line of verse *The sún-set | at lást and | the twn-light | are deáð, and | the dárkness | is breáðless*

anacoluthon (pron *an-ak-ol-oo-thon*) A badly constructed sentence in which the syntax of the second part does not agree with that of the first, e.g. *I tried to explain that if he refused my advice* what was to become of him?

anacrusis (pron *an-a-kroo-sis*) Unaccented syllables (optional in some metres, and demanded by others), coming before the point at which the reckoning of the normal accents begins, e.g.

*The dáy | light móon | looked³ quiet | ly dówn
Through | the gáth | ering dúsk | on Lon | don
tówn*

anagram A word or phrase formed by transposing the letters of another

analysis The examination of the construction of a sentence

anapaest (pron *an-a-peest*) A metrical foot consisting of two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed, e.g. *undernéath, down belów* This is an example of anapaestic verse

*At the córn- | er of Wóod | Street when dáy- |
light ap-peárs*

anaphora (pron an-*af*-o-ra) The repetition of a word or words in successive clauses or sentences, e g I believe *he may*; I believe *he will*, I believe *he must*

anastrophe (pron an-*ass*-tro-fi) A changing of the normal order of words for rhetorical effect, e g *Came the dawn*

antecedent A noun or clause to which a following pronoun or adverb refers, e g in the sentence *The boy who did it is here*, *boy* is the antecedent of *who*

antepenult The last syllable but two of a word The adjective is *antepenultimate*

anticlimax. A sentence or passage in which an impressive beginning is followed by a trivial or bathetic ending See BATHOS

antistrophe See STROPHE

antithesis (pron an-*tith*-i-sis) An arrangement of words intended to emphasize a contrast, e g *The foolish will disregard this warning, the wise will observe it*

aphaeresis (pron af-*ee*-ri-sis) The loss of an initial syllable, as in *spite* (for *despite*)

aphesis (pron af-*i*-sis) The loss of an initial letter, as in *specially* (for *especially*), by gradual and unintentional aphaeresis

aphonic. Not sounded

apocope (pron a-*pok*-o-pi) The loss of a final syllable or syllables, as in *cinema* (for *cinematograph*), *auto* (for *automobile*).

apodosis (pron *a-pod-o-sis*) The main clause, expressing the result or consequence in a conditional sentence, e g in the sentence *I will come if I can*, *I will come* is the apodosis, and *if I can*, the conditional clause, is known as the protasis

aposiopesis (pron. a-pos-i-oh-*pee*-sis) A sudden breaking-off in the middle of a sentence, leaving the hearer to supply the unspoken words, e g *Well, I'll be* , '

apostrophe Mark (') used to indicate the omission of a letter (as in *o'er*), or the possessive case of a noun (*man's*) also a digression in speech or writing for the purpose of addressing a person or thing, absent or present, e g

*Long Scrolls of Paper solemnly he waves,
With Characters, and Figures dire inscrib'd,
Grievous to Mortal Eyes, (ye Gods avert
Such Plagues from Righteous Men!) Behind
him stalks
Another Monster, not unlike himself*

apposition The placing of a second description in the same syntactic relation as another in the same sentence, e g *Mary, Mother of Jesus, help us!*

archaism An out-of-date word, e g *yclept* for *called* '

arsis. The stressed part of a foot in prosody, opposite of **THESIS** Stressed syllables are said to be *in arsis*, the unstressed *in thesis*

article, definite. *The* is called the definite article because it indicates one particular object or category See ADJECTIVE (demonstrative)

article, indefinite *A* or *an* are known as the indefinite articles because they indicate one, but not a particular, object See ADJECTIVE (demonstrative)

aspirate The sound of the letter 'h' when not joined to another consonant, i.e. as in *hat*, but not in *phial*

assonance The rhyming of words in their accented vowels and the vowels that follow, but not in the consonant or consonants that follow, e.g. *pander* and *clamber*

B

ballad Originally a song sung as an accompaniment to dancing, now used to describe either a simple, sentimental song with a few verses each sung to the same tune, or a simple narrative poem in short stanzas *B-metre* a four-line stanza in which a line of four iambuses alternates with one of three, and the second and fourth lines rhyme

ballade An old and elaborate French verse-form, revived in France and England during the nineteenth century It consists of three stanzas of eight (or ten) lines and an envoy of four (or

LITERARY AND GRAMMATICAL TERMS

five) lines Only three (or four) rhymes are used, and they are in the same order in each stanza The same line is used to end each stanza and the envoy

bathos A passage which is intended to impress, but which instead arouses ridicule owing to an incongruous association of ideas, e g this from Wordsworth

*The piteous news, so much it shocked her
She quite forgot to send the doctor*

belles-lettres (pron bel-let-tr) Writings which are purely literary, as distinct from informational compositions

blank verse Any unrhymed verse, but used particularly of unrhymed verse of ten syllables, or five iambic feet

brachylogy (pron bra-kil-o-ji) Condensation of speech, sometimes idiomatically and sometimes illegitimately, e g *It's no use* (It is of no use), or incorrectly, *John is as good (as), if not better than, Henry*

brackets The signs () used to enclose a parenthesis (q v)

burlesque An imitation or caricature of a serious work, especially of a play

C

caesura (pron see-zoo-ra) A rhythmic break in metrical line, usually about the middle, e g *Though wit may flash from fluent lips / and mirth distract the breast*

cardinal numerals See ADJECTIVE

case The form assumed by a noun or pronoun to show its relation to other words in a sentence. The word (Latin *casus*) means a falling, and reminds us that at one time grammarians regarded the nominative case as the *upright* case and the rest as *falling away* from it. (The word *declension* has the same meaning.) There are five cases in modern English: (i) *nominative*, (ii) *vocative*, (iii) *accusative* or *objective*, (iv) *genitive* or *possessive*, (v) *dative*. They indicate (i) the subject of a verb, e g in the sentence *Aeroplanes travel fast* we say that *aeroplanes* is in the nominative case, (ii) the person spoken to, e g James, *you are wrong*. This form is sometimes called the *nominative of address*, (iii) the direct object of a verb or preposition, e g *He broke the window*, (iv) the owner or possessor of something, e g *This is Mary's hat*, (v) an indirect object, e g. *He gave me a cigarette*. In Old English nouns were inflected (= changed their endings) to indicate their case. To-day only the possessive form is inflected by the addition of 's. The

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reason for this is that the genitive form in the Old English masculine declension ended in *-es*, and the apostrophe is used to indicate the missing letter. Sometimes the *-es* was written *-s*, and this has given rise to the erroneous belief that *s'* is a short form of *his*

catachresis (pron *kat-a-kree-sis*) The use of words in senses that do not belong to them, as *lousy* = unpleasant, *chromic* = intense, severe

catalectic See ACATALECTIC

causerie A conversational article, usually one of a series in a newspaper or periodical, on any subject of general interest, but especially on literary subjects. Named after Sainte-Beuve's famous *Causeries du Lundi* (Monday Talks) contributed to two Paris newspapers from 1849-69

cedilla Mark placed under the letter *c* (ç) to show that it is to be pronounced like the letter *s*

cento A literary or musical work made up of quotations

cinquain Five consecutive lines of verse, a *pentastich*

circumflex accent Mark (^) used in Greek probably to indicate a rising and falling inflection of the voice. Used in French to indicate the loss of a sound, usually *s*, e.g. *fenêtre* from Old French *fenestre*, Latin *fenestra*

clause A short sentence, part of a complex

sentence, including a subject and predicate but doing the work of a noun, adjective or adverb, e g *You saw* what I had, *This is the house* that Jack built, *On Linden*, when the sun was low, *all bloodless lay the untrodden snow* A *principal cl* in a sentence makes sense by itself. A *sub-ordinate cl* is dependent on words which either precede or follow it

cliché (pron *klee-shay*) A hackneyed phrase (named after the French for a stereotype block), e g *like the curate's egg*, *succulent bivalve* (for oyster), *finny tribe* (for fish) Plural clichés

collective noun See NOUN

colloquialism A word or phrase used in ordinary communication, but not in dignified or formal speech or writing, e g *fucks* (for cinematograph pictures), *bobby* (for policeman)

colon The double point ()

common gender See GENDER

common noun See NOUN

comparative See DEGREE

comparison (of adjectives and adverbs) See DEGREE

complement If a verb does not require an object, yet requires a word or phrase to make sense, such word or phrase is called the complement of the verb, e.g *He seemed lame*, *You are very late*, *I must go*

concord. Agreement (1) in number of an

adjective with its noun, visible in English only in the demonstrative adjectives *this*, *these*, *that*, *those*, (2) in number and person of a verb with its subject (3) in case of nouns in apposition

concrete nouns See NOUN

conjugation The inflection of verbs, or one of several classes of verbs each inflected in a different way *Weak* and *strong conj* See VERB

conjunction A word used to join sentences, parts of sentences, or single words Cc are of two kinds, co-ordinative or weak, which join sentences or words of equal importance (e g *six* and *eightpence*, *I saw him*, but *only for a moment*, *either* or and *neither* nor are also classified as *co-ordinative* or *correlative cc*) and *subordinative* or *strong*, which connect a subordinate sentence with a sentence expressing a thought of greater importance (e g *I told him that I will not agree* = I will not agree I told him that) Other sub cc are *after*, *because*, *before*, *if*, *lest*, *unless*, *whether* . . or, *why*, *when*, *where*, *how*, *though*, *since* Cc which join two or more subjects or predicates are sometimes called *copulative cc*, e g *The bat and ball are missing* A *disjunctive cc* also links two or more words of equal status, but instead of combination indicates contrast or an alternative, e g *Not he but I was the victim*.

copulative verb. See VERB

couplet Two successive lines of verse, especially when of the same metrical form, and rhymed, usually with a complete meaning, a distich

crasis The contraction of two different vowel sounds into one, as in *sheik* when pronounced *sheek*

D

dactyl A foot of three syllables, one stressed followed by two unstressed, as in *vocalist* So called because it suggested to the Greeks a finger (*daktulos*) This is an example of dactylic verse

Make no deep | scrútiny | Into her | mútiny

dative. See CASE

decastich Ten consecutive lines of verse a
dizain

declension. The inflection of nouns, pronouns and adjectives, also a class of such words inflected in a particular way

degree The modification in the form of an adjective or adverb which denotes the intensity of the quality named There are three *of comparison* the *positive*, which denotes the quality in its simplest form, e g *a fine day*, the *comparative*, which indicates that one object possesses a certain quality in a higher degree than another object, e g *To-day is a finer day than yesterday*, and the *superlative*, which denotes the highest possible degree of a quality, e g. *Thus*

has been the finest day Most adjj of *quality*, two of *quantity* (*much* and *little*) and two of *number* (*many* and *few*) have degrees of comparison All those of more than two syllables, and most with two syllables, form the comp by adding *more* and the superl by adding *most*, e g *beautiful, more beautiful, most beautiful* This is called the *analytical* method of comparison Adjv of one syll, and some of two, form the comp by adding *-r* or *-er*, and the superl by adding *-st* or *-est*, e g *full, fuller, fullest* This is called the *synthetical* or *flectional* method A few adjj have a different word for each degree (*much, more, most*), some have no positive form (being originally derived from adverbs), e g (*in*), *inner, innermost*, and some cannot be compared at all, e g *annual, perpetual, square, second* Advv are compared in the same way as adjj e g *near, nearer, nearest* Those in *-ly* take *more* and *most* (*fully, more fully, most fully*)

dental A consonant formed by placing the tongue-tip behind the upper teeth (*d, t, th, n*)

diaeresis (pron dy-ee-ri-sis) Mark (·) placed over the second of two consecutive vowels to indicate that they are to be pronounced separately, e g aërated.

dialect. A local form of speech distinguished from standard speech by peculiarities of accent, idiom or vocabulary.

digraph The combination of two consonants, or two vowels, representing only one sound, as *ph, ch, th, ee, ea, au* (as in *cause*), *ui* (as in *fruit*)

dimeter (pron *dim-i-ter*) A metrical line consisting of two measures, i.e. of either two or four feet See MEASURE

diphthong Two vowels pronounced as one (ei in *conceit*), or as one syllable (ou in *proud*) or joined together in writing or printing (œ, æ)

dipody A double foot, two feet making one measure See MEASURE

distich (pron *dis-tik*) See COUPLET

dizain See DECASTICH

E

elegiacs (pron *el-e-jy-aks*) Couplets in Greek and Latin verse (rarely imitated in English), each consisting of a hexameter and a pentameter (q v.).

elegy Strictly, a song of mourning in elegiac verse, any poem expressing lamentation or melancholy reflection

elision (pron *ee-lizh'n*). The omission of a vowel or syllable in pronunciation, especially when it immediately precedes another vowel, e.g. *Th' applause of listening senates to command. With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the skies!*

ellipsis. The omission from a sentence of a word or words which are usually intended to be

supplied by the reader or hearer, e g *one man was dead, the other* (man was) *dying, I think* (that) *he will*

emphasis Laying stress on an entire word, as distinct from one syllable (accent)

enjambment The continuation of a sentence beyond the end of a couplet and into the first line of the next.

envoy A postscript to a poem, usually in fewer lines than the preceding stanzas (as in the BALLADE)

epicene A noun common to both sexes, as *orphan, parent*

epigram A short, witty, and usually satirical poem or saying

epithet An adjective expressing a quality or attribute, a significant name

epode (pron *ep-ode*) See PINDARIC ODE

epopee (pron *ep-o-pee*) An epic poem or poetry

essay Strictly, a short piece of prose on any particular subject To-day, however, the name signifies a literary composition in which the writer expresses his personal reflections on a chosen subject.

etymology. The study of the origin and history of words

euphemism An inoffensive substitute for a blunt, coarse or unconventional expression.

e g *interesting event* (for birth), *queer in the head* (for insane)

euphony Such a combination of sounds as produces a pleasing effect

euphuism An artificial style of writing or speaking, so named after John Lyly's *Euphues*, a highly-mannered moral tale which set a fashion for writers at the end of the sixteenth century

explosive The name given to those consonants sounded by suddenly parting the organs of speech (*b, d, hard g, k, p, t*) Sometimes called *stops, stop consonants* or *mutes*, because their sound cannot be prolonged

F

factitive A name given to verbs expressing the ideas of making, calling and thinking, e g *The team made Smith captain, They called him a genius, I think you are wrong* The complements to the objects in such sentences (i e *captain, genius*) if nouns, are called *factitive objects*

feminine ending The name given to an unstressed syllable at the end of an iambic or anapaestic line, e g (iambic) *Thus have I had thee as a dream doth flatter*, (anapaestic) *So the flowers come to bloom in the warmth of the summer*

feminine gender See GENDER

figure of speech. An imaginative expression

used to heighten the effect of what is said or written, e g a simile or allegory (q v)

foot The unit of metre, a division of a metrical line consisting of one stressed syllable plus one or more unstressed syllables

fused participle. See PARTICIPLE

G

gender The form of a word corresponding with the sex of, or the absence of sex in, the thing denoted There are four divisions, (i) *masculine* for males, e g *man, bull, ram*, (ii) *feminine* for females, e g *woman, cow, sheep*, (iii) *neuter* for inanimate things, e g *knife, shoe*, (iv) *common* for words that are applicable to either males or females, e g *child, beast, elephant*

genitive See CASE

gerund A noun taking the same form as the present participle of a verb (i e ending in *-ing*), but retaining the power of a verb to govern an object, or to be modified by an adverb or an adverb equivalent It should therefore be distinguished from a verbal noun, which has lost this power and is used simply as an abstract noun. Thus in the sentence *He enjoys running races*, *running* is a g., but in *Running is a good exercise for boxers* it is a verbal noun

grammar The study of word formations, pronunciations, and the relations of words to each other in sentences

grave accent (˘)

guttural Sounds made by employing the root of the tongue (*k*, *g*, *ch* as in *loch*)

H

hemistich Half a line of poetry

hendecasyllable Eleven-syllable. Applied to a metre having lines of eleven syllables as in Dante's *terza rima* (q v)

hendiadys (pron *hen-dy-a-dys*) A rhetorical figure in which two words or phrases, one of which is normally dependent on the other, are treated as equals and connected by "and" *We slew them with the sword and with the steel* (for swords of steel) *With joy and tidings fraught, to hell he now returned* (for joyful tidings) Instances are rare in English verse, but according to Fowler such constructions as *nice and warm*, *try and come*, are true examples in common speech

heptastich Seven consecutive lines of verse

heroic. Pertaining to poetry dealing with the deeds of heroes *H verse* (or metre) originally the metre (dactylic hexameter) in which classic heroic poetry was written, now the verse form

in which the accepted heroic poetry of any particular language is written, e.g. in English the line of ten syllables and five stresses (five-foot iambic) either in rhymed couplets (h couplets) as in Pope and Dryden, or blank verse as in *Paradise Lost*, in French the alexandrine (q v), in Italian the hendecasyllabic line

hexameter (pron hex-am-i-ter) The Greek and Latin heroic metre, consisting of four dactyls or spondees, a dactyl and a spondee (q v) It has been imitated in English stressed rhythm, thus

*List to the / móurnful tra / dition still / úng by
the / pínes of the / forest*

hexastich. See SESTET

hiatus (pron hy-ate-us) Literally "yawning" The gap between two similar vowels falling at the end of one word or syllable and the beginning of the next

historic Applied to tenses which narrate past events, the *past simple* (*I painted*), the *past continuous* (*I was painting*) and the *past perfect* (*I had painted*)

historic present See TENSE

homonym. A word which has the same form as another but a different meaning, e.g. *He emptied his case* *The case for the defence occupied an hour*

homophone. A word which sounds like

another but is spelt differently and has a different meaning, e g *thyme* and *time* A paronym

huitain See OCTAVE

hypallage (pron hy-*pal*-a-jı) A figure of speech in which the natural relationship of two elements in a sentence is reversed without changing the sentence's essential meaning, e g *A lamp-post bumped into me* for "I bumped into a lamp-post" Fowler gives the different definition "The transferring of an epithet from the more to the less natural part of a group of nouns, as when Virgil speaks of 'the trumpets' Tuscan blare' instead of 'The Tuscan trumpets' blare'"

hyperbaton (pron hy-*per*-bat-on) A construction in which the normal order of words is inverted for the purpose of emphasis, e g Deaf *I am not*, blind *I am not*

hyperbole. An exaggerated statement intended to emphasize, but not to deceive, e g. *Cricket is an infinitely better game than golf*, *Tons of money*, *A thousand thanks*

hysteron proteron The inversion of a natural order of expression, e g "*How is Jones?*" "*He is well, and lives*"

I

iambics. (pron eye-*am*-bıks) A metre consisting either of iambuses, or iambuses with other feet allowed as substitutes See IAMBUS.

iambus A metrical foot composed of a stressed syllable preceded by an unstressed syllable, e g *in-deed per-haps with-stand* The following line consists of four iambuses, and would thus be described as iambic verse

The way / was lóng, / the níght / was còld /

Iambic pentameter (five iambic feet) is by far the most common form of English verse, having been used by Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and other great poets

ictus Rhythmical or metrical stress

idiom A combination of words which is not strictly in accordance with grammatical rules, but which is sanctioned by usage, e g *I all but fell* (=I almost fell)

imperative See MOOD

imperative absolute See ABSOLUTE

incomplete verb See VERB

indicative See MOOD

infinitive See MOOD

infinitive absolute See ABSOLUTE

inflection The variation in the spelling of words (as in nouns by declension, in verbs by conjugation) in order to show their grammatical relations to their context. Thus *gone* and *going* are inflections of *to go*.

interjection. A word expressing a sudden emotion and having no grammatical relation to

other words in a sentence, e g *Oh! alas! hurrah!*
Dear me! For shame! Good-bye! Farewell!

intransitive verb. See VERB

J

jargon Dull, confusing speech, consisting largely of technical terms, smatterings of different languages, debased dialect, or (sometimes) of long, pompous words where short ones would do.

L

lampoon Originally a drinking song Now a satire, in verse or prose, usually upon an individual

Leonine verse Medieval Latin verse in hexameter or elegiac meter with an internal rhyme. Generally, any verse in which the end rhymes with the middle, e g *Arethusa arose from her couch of snows*

ligature Two or more letters joined in print (e g *fi, fl*)

lingo A colloquial name for a foreign language

liquids Name given to the sounds *l, r*, and sometimes *m* and *n*

litotes. (pron *ly-to-teez*)' meiosis (q v)

lyric A name loosely given to any short poem, divided into stanzas, in which the writer expresses his own thoughts and emotions (as contrasted with a poem that describes events).

M

macaronic verse A name applied loosely to verse in which two or more languages are mixed, e g *Amo amas, I love a lass, As a cedar tall and slender*, etc

macron A short horizontal mark placed over a vowel to show that the sound is long

masculine gender See GENDER

measure A metrical unit, as a foot or dipody (double foot) used to determine the length of a verse Thus we say that a *monometer, dimeter, trimeter, tetrameter*, etc, consist respectively of one, two, three, four, etc, measures, or of one or two, two or four, three or six, four or eight, etc, feet

meiosis (pron my-oh-sis) The use of understatement for the purpose of emphasis, or of a negative to imply a positive, e g "*Did you enjoy yourself?*" "Rather!", *He has rendered no small service* (Same as LITOTES)

metaphor. A compressed simile (q v), a form of expression in which for the sake of vividness, a description is applied to an object to which it is not literally applicable, e g *Those piercing eyes, He is a wolf in sheep's clothing, The sapphire sea Mixed m* The combination of two or more incompatible metaphors, as in the famous peroration attributed to Sir Boyle Roche *I smell a rat, I see it floating in the air, but I will nip it in the bud* Even Shakespeare

nodded when he put into Hamlet's mouth *To take arms against a sea of troubles*

metaplasms. The transposition of words from their customary order (e g *Silver and Gold have I none*), the alteration of a word by adding, transposing, or removing syllables or letters, the formation of cases from a stem other than that of the nominative (This does not apply to English).

metathesis (pron met-*ath*-i-sis) The transposition of successive sounds or letters in a word, e g in Old English *wasþ* was wæps, and *third* thriddle

metonymy (pron. met-*on*-i-mi) The substitution of the name of an attribute, or other suggestive word, for the name of the thing meant, e g *Throne* (for sovereign), *Shaw* (for Shaw's plays), *the City* (for London's financial houses)

metre Any form of rhythm in verse, measured by the character and number of its feet

Miltonic sonnet See SONNET

mixed metaphor. See METAPHOR

monometer (pron mon-*om*-i-ter) A line or verse consisting of one metrical unit See MEASURE

monostich (pron mon-*o*'-stik) One line of poetry

mood. The manner in which a thought is expressed by a verb There are four moods in English (i) *indicative*, (ii) *imperative*, (iii) *sub-*

junctive, (iv) *infinitive* (i) Makes a direct assertion or asks a direct question, e g *The horse is lame, Are you ready?* (ii) expresses a command or entreaty, e g *Go at once! Please forgive me!* (iii) usually expresses a condition, purpose, wish, or futurity, e g *Should he fail (=if he fails), we are lost, Be thrifty, lest thou die in poverty* The subjunctive is used chiefly in subordinate sentences or clauses, (iv) the simplest form of a verb, expressing an action or state without reference to any person or thing, e g *to go, to do, to have* The inf may be used either as a noun, e g. *To change her mind (=changeableness) is a woman's privilege*, as an adjective, e g *This house is to let*, as an adverb, e g *I will do my best to help you*, as an absolute, e g *To put the matter in a nutshell* In all these examples the preposition *to* has been used, but it is not an essential part of the infinitive when it is used in a sentence It is dropped, for example, after most auxiliary verbs and verbs expressing sensations, also usually after *but*, e g *I can do it, Let him come, You can but try* When another word is interposed between the *to* and the rest of the verb we say that the *infinitive* has been *split*—a practice frowned on by strict grammarians, but justified in certain contexts E g *To hardheartedly and resolutely murder* . is bad, but *to half do* can be justified Note that in such

phrases as *This will have to be thoroughly investigated* the infinitive is not split because *investigate* is not part of it. The wrong form would be *This will have to thoroughly be investigated*, because *to be* is the infinitive.

mute See EXPLOSIVE.

N

nasal Sounds made through the nose—*m*, *n*, *ng*

neologism The use of a new word or idiom with authority behind it, but not entirely established in general use, e.g. such American importations as *socialite*, *hot music*.

neuter gender See GENDER

nominative See CASE

nominative absolute See ABSOLUTE

non sequitur (Lat. "It does not follow") A conclusion which does not follow from the premises given, hence a sentence in which the second part does not follow logically from the first, e.g. *Born in Liverpool, he had blue eyes and red hair*

noun The name of any thing, person, action, quality or place, *abstract n*, the name of a quality, e.g. *honesty*, *beauty*, *sin*; *collective n*, the name of a group of objects regarded as a whole, e.g. *army*, *crowd*, *herd*, *common n.*, the name of any one of a class of objects with characteristics in common, e.g. *man*, *dog*, *boat*; *concrete n*, the name of any

object with a physical existence, e g *wood, tent, ocean*; *n equivalent*, a word or phrase that takes the place of a noun, e g *He is lame* Lying in bed *is a lazy habit*, *predicate n*, one which completes the predicate, e g *My father is a solicitor*, *proper n*, the name of a person, place, or any individual object as distinguished from the name of a class, e g *Henry, France, Zulu*, *n of multitude*, a collective n used to indicate the constituent parts of a whole (i e with a plural verb), e g *the team* (were at sixes and sevens) *the crowd* (were fighting amongst themselves) *Verbal n* See GERUND

noun equivalent See NOUN

noun substantive See SUBSTANTIVE

number That form of a noun, pronoun or verb which tells us whether it applies to one or more persons or things Each noun, pronoun or verb-tense has two nn, *singular* and *plural* See SINGULAR.

O

object A noun or noun-equivalent (q v) governed by an active transitive verb or by a preposition

objective See CASE

octastich See OCTAVE

octave. Eight consecutive lines of verse, also called an octastich, huitain, or octet

octet See OCTAVE

octosyllabics Eight-syllable rhyming metre, e.g.

*On Linden, when the sun was low,
All bloodless lay the untrodden snow*

ode A poem of moderate length (usually from 50 to 150 lines) usually rhymed, of irregular form, and written to celebrate a special occasion, in honour of a particular person, or on a special theme. Originally a song sung by the chorus, often accompanied by music and dancing, in ancient Greek drama.

onomatopoeia (pron *on-o-mat-o-pee-a*) The formation of words or names suggested by sounds peculiar to the action or object to be named, e.g. *bow-wow* (for dog), *cuckoo*, *splash*, *quack-quack*, and the association of sounds, especially in verse, to suggest the sense.

*I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing through the reeds*

ordinal numerals See ADJECTIVE

ottava rima (pron *ot-tahva ree-ma*) An eight-lined stanza, with eleven syllables to the line in Italian and ten in English, invented by Boccaccio and now the accepted Italian heroic metre. It is used by Byron in *Don Juan*. The rhyme-sequence is *abababcc*.

oxymoron (pron *oks-i-moh-ron*). A rhetorical figure in which two terms, ordinarily contradictory, are combined in one phrase or sentence,

e g *I must be cruel to be kind* The most-quoted instance is from Tennyson's *Lancelot and Elaine*.

*His honour rooted in dishonour stood
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true*

P

palatal Sounds made by placing the middle of the tongue against the roof of the mouth, e g the *y* in *yacht*

palindrome A word, phrase or sentence that reads the same backwards as forwards The most famous example in English is *Able was I ere I saw Elba*

parable An allegorical story intended to illustrate and emphasize moral teachings.

parenthesis A word or words indicated by dashes, brackets, or commas, inserted in a sentence which is grammatically complete without them, e g *The bull—I saw it—broke through the fence*

parody. A facetious imitation of an author's style

paronomasia Another name for punning
See PUN

paronym See HOMOPHONE

parsing The precise description of the function of a word in a given sentence

participle A verbal adjective A verb has two pp, the present and past, e g *die*, *dying* (pres p.), *dead* (past p) They may be used

either as adjectives (*a dying cause, a dead donkey*), as verbs with an auxiliary *v* (*That bird is dying, It was dead when we arrived*), or partly as an adjective and partly as a verb. *The thief, grasping his victim, struck him twice* Here *grasping* qualifies *thief* like an adj., and governs *victim* like a verb. *Fused p* The name given to a faulty construction in which a noun or pronoun not in the possessive case is joined to a participle in a context which requires the possessive case. Thus it is wrong to write *Italy agrees not to interfere with Russia sending troops to Spain* because the object can be neither *Russia* nor *sending*, but a compound of the two which cannot be analysed. The sentence should read *Russia's sending*. Here *sending* is the true object—a gerund—and *Russia's* the word that qualifies it.

particle A minor, indeclinable part of speech, a common prefix or suffix.

partitive A noun or pronoun which distinguishes a part from the whole, e.g. *piece, portion, most, part, half, some*. The *p genitive* is the word that denotes the whole usually preceded by *of*, e.g. in the sentence *Most of us like sugar*, *most* is the *p* word and *of us* the *p genitive*.

parts of speech The eight classes into which words are divided: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, and interjections.

passive voice See VOICE

pastiche A literary composition written in deliberate imitation of another, but with no intention of parodying it Thus the style of Meredith's *Shaving of Shagpat* is based on that of *The Arabian Nights' Entertainment*

pentameter (pron pen-tam-i-ter) A line of five feet, of which the first half may be dactylic or spondaic and the second must consist of two dactyls (q v) Used alternatively with the hexameter in elegiac verse In English prosody, any line consisting of five feet

pentastich See CINQUAIN

penult The last syllable but one of a word This is a noun the adj is *penultimate*

period A full stop, a complete sentence, esp one containing subordinate clauses

peripeteia (pron per-ip-et-ee-a) A sudden change of fortune in a drama or a story

periphrasis (pron per-rif-ra-sis) A round-about way of speaking

persiflage (pron per-si-flahzh) Banter, talking with one's tongue in one's cheek

person The form of a pronoun which denotes whether it refers to the person or persons speaking, the person or persons spoken to, or the person or persons (or things) spoken about The different forms are 1st p, *I* or *we*, 2nd p, *thou* or *you*, 3rd p., *he*, *she*, *it*, *they* The verb tenses inflect

for person in the singular I *go*, Thou *goest*, He *goes*

personification A figure of speech in which personal qualities are attributed to an abstraction, e.g. *Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust?*

Petrarchan sonnet See SONNET

philology The study of words, or more specifically, the comparative study of different languages in a particular group

phonetics The study of speech-sounds

phrase A group of words that makes sense, but not a complete sentence, e.g. *A rolling stone, a stitch in time*

Pindaric ode The triumphal choric ode as written by the Greek poet Pindar. In the English imitation of it, represented best by Gray's two poems *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard*, the ode consists of nine stanzas divided into three groups of three. The first stanza of each group corresponds with the Greek *strophe*, "part of a choric ode chanted while the chorus proceeded in one direction" (Fowler), the second, identical in form, with the *antistrophe*, the part chanted by the chorus on its return, and the third to the *epode* or "additional song," chanted after the *strophe* and the *antistrophe*.

pleonasm The use of superfluous words, esp. words saying over again what has already been said in a sentence, e.g. *He is blind and is totally unable to see.*

plural. See SINGULAR.

poetic licence Latitude allowed to poets in regard to grammatical construction, and occasionally to the use of facts, but denied to writers of prose, e g Byron's *There let him lay* (instead of *lie*)

positive See DEGREE

possessive See CASE

predicate The word or words in a sentence which express what is said about the subject, e g *He is* an Englishman, *A little ship* was on the sea

prefix A word or syllable placed before another word to qualify its meaning, as *arch-*, *re-* and *inter-* in *archbishop*, *re-enter*, *interdepartmental*

preposition A word placed (usually) before the name of a person or thing to show the relationship of that person or thing to another named in the sentence, e g *He sat on the chair* The prep is said to *govern* the word to which it is attached There are two kinds *simple* (*by*, *with*, *to*, *from*, *on*, *off*, *in*, *out*, etc) and *compound*, formed from a simple prep and some other word (*into*, *towards*, *underneath*, *behind*, *outside*) Occasionally a prep is used after the word it governs, e g *This is the book we were reading from* (= from which we were reading) Some words are used either as pp, adverbs or conjunctions, and must be distinguished according to the part

they play in a sentence, e g. *I am going inside the building* (prep), *I am going inside* (adv), *None but* (= except) *the brave deserve the fair* (prep), *I think so, but I am not sure* (conj)

prolative The name given to those verbs which require the addition of another verb in the infinitive to complete the sense, e g the auxiliary verbs and others expressing *wish, intention, willingness, ability*, etc , as in *I want to go to-morrow*

proper noun See NOUN

pronoun " A word used instead of a noun, usually to avoid repetition, e g *The box was green, it had no lid* Pp are of several kinds *personal* (*I, thou, he, she, it, we, you, they*), *relative* (*who, that, which, what, as*, and such compounds as *whoever, whatever*, etc), *interrogative* (*who, what, which, whom, whose*), *possessive* (*mine, ours, thine, yours, his, hers, its, theirs*), *demonstrative* (*this, that, these, those*), *distributive* (*each, every, either, neither*, etc), *indefinite* (*one, none, any, other, some*, etc), *reflexive* (*myself, yourself, ourselves, himself, itself*, etc), *emphasizing* (compounds of *-self* used as in the sentence *I myself did not see it*), *exclamatory* (*what*, as in the sentence *What! are you going already?*) **Relative pp** are sometimes called *conjunctive pp.* because they join two sentences, e g *That is the man whom the King delighteth to honour* (=That is the man the King delighteth to honour him).

prose Language in ordinary usage, without rhyme or metre, in contrast to *verse*

prosody. That branch of grammar which treats of the laws of versification (rhyme, metre, accent, etc)

prosopopoeia (pron pros-o-po-pee-a) A rhetorical device by which inanimate or non-human things are addressed as persons, e g O *Tiber*, Father Tiber, *to whom the Romans pray*

protasis See APODOSIS

pun A (usually) humorous play on words having a similar sound but different meanings

pyrrhic In Classical verse, a metrical foot of two short syllables

Q

quantity In Classical verse, the relative length of sounds or syllables in verse, determined by the time it takes to pronounce them

quartet See QUATRAIN

quatorzain Fourteen consecutive lines of verse

quatrain Four consecutive lines of verse, also called a *tetrastich* or *quartet*

quinzain Fifteen consecutive lines of verse

q v Short for Latin *quod vide* = which see
A formula used for cross-references.

R

recessive accent The tendency in English to shift the stress to the beginning of a several-syllabled word, e g from *la-bor-a-tor-y* to *lab-or-a-tory*, and from *hos-pit-able* to *hos-pit-able*

reflexive verb See VERB

reflexive pronoun See PRONOUN.

rhetoric The art of impressive and convincing speaking or writing Sometimes used in a derogatory sense, implying artificiality, bombast

rhotacism Emphasis of the letter *r*, as in Scotch and several English dialects Also used of Latin inflections in which *s* is changed to *r* for the sake of euph^ony

rhyme Identity of sound in the end-words or syllables of two or more lines of verse Strictly the correspondence must begin with the last stressed syllable and extend over what may follow, while the sounds preceding it must be different Thus *seat* and *feet* are regarded as rhymes, but *re-seated* and *conceited* are not Words spelt alike but pronounced differently, as *shove* or *move*, make *imperfect rh*, one-syllable *rh* are called *male*, *masculine*, or *single*, two syll. *double*, *feminine*, or *female*, three or four syll. *triple* and *quadruple*

rhythm. The measured recurrence of accented

and un-accented syllables in verse, occasionally applied also to prose

rondeau A metrical form of thirteen lines (or as popularized by Villon, ten), with only two rhymes, variously placed. The opening words (usually half the line) recur at the end of the eighth line (the sixth in Villon) and at the end, but do not enter the rhyme-scheme. The metre is usually eight-syllabled, with four stresses, but Swinburne developed a form of his own (see **ROUNDEL**) and Leigh Hunt's well-known *Jenny kissed me when we met* has only seven lines and a refrain, although it is described as a rondeau.

rondel. A variant of the rondeau with a refrain consisting of the whole of the first line, or the first two. The first two recur after the sixth line and either one or both of them at the end. The length may accordingly be thirteen or fourteen lines.

roundel. In ordinary usage the English form of rondeau and rondel, but the word has come to be associated with a variant form popularized by Swinburne, having nine lines and a refrain after the third and last.

rune. (1) Strictly, a Finnish poem, or part of one, esp. of the *Kalevala*. Incorrectly applied to other Scandinavian poems. (2) A character of the earliest alphabet used in N. Europe, derived chiefly from the Greek alphabet and of suitable shape for carving on wood or stone.

S ·

saga A Scandinavian prose epic, usually dating from medieval times, and embodying the history of an Icelandic family or Norwegian King. The popularity of Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga* gave the word a new currency and significance, and it is now applied loosely to any family chronicle covering several generations.

sapphics Sapphic verse, a Greek metre used by Sappho, imitated (in Latin) by Horace, and also, "with grotesque misrepresentation of the rhythm" (Fowler), in English. The English sapphic stanza consists of three lines of five beats followed by a short line, e.g. Cowper's

*Hatred and vengeance, my eternal portion,
Scarce can endure delay of execution,
Wait, with impatient readiness, to seize my
Soul in a moment*

satire The use of sarcasm or ridicule (origin in poetry) as a weapon against wrong-doers, political opponents, etc.

scan. To examine the number and kind of feet in a line. The number corresponds to the number of *stresses*, and not of syllables.

semicolon The mark (;), used by the Greeks as a mark of interrogation, now used to separate clauses of equal importance in a compound sentence, or clauses not joined by a conjunction.

semivowel The letters *w* and *y*, also sometimes applied to *f*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *r*, *s*, and *x*

senarius Latin use of six feet, esp iambic trimeter acatalectic (See ACATALECTIC) An alexandrine (q v)

sentence A group of words (or occasionally only one word) which expresses a thought It must contain a subject and predicate, expressed or understood

septenarius A line with seven feet

sequence The manner in which the tense of the subordinate clause in a sentence depends on the principal clause

sestet Six consecutive lines of verse, also called a *hexastich*, *sixain*, *sextain*, or *sextet*

sestina. An intricate verse-form attrib to a Provençal poet of the twelfth century, and consisting of six six-line stanzas (orig unrhymed) and a three-line envoy The six end-words are repeated in a different order in each stanza, and are so distributed in the envoy that three occur in the middle and three at the end of the lines The most notable modern example is Kipling's *Sestina of the Tramp-Royal* in *The Seven Seas* See also Rossetti's *Of the Lady Pietra degli Scrovigni*

sextain See SESTET

sextet See SESTET

Shakespearian sonnet See SONNET.

sibilant Name given to any of the sounds *s*, *z*, *sh* and *zh* (as in *pleasure*)

simile. A figure of speech in which, for the sake either of ornament, illustration, or explanation one thing is directly compared with another. It is usually introduced by *as* or *like*, e.g. *The steaming river loitered like old blood. As the wind lifts the leaf, so he lifted her up*

singular Relating to a single person or thing, contrasted with *dual* or *plural*, e.g. the personal pronoun *I* is known as the *first person singular*, and *we* as the *first person plural*, *dog* is a *s* noun and *dogs* a plural, (he) *runs* is a *s* verb and (they) *run* a plural

sixain See SESTET

solecism A grammatical error

soliloquy Talking to oneself, especially used in connection with a character in a play

sonant Said of explosive consonants (see EXPLOSIVE) that involve vibration of the vocal cords, e.g. *b*, *d*, *g*

sonnet A poem of fourteen iambic lines, which may be arranged in one of several ways. The regular form, known as the Petrarchan, consists of an octave (eight lines) rhyming *abbaabba* and a sestet (six lines) with two or three rhymes variously arranged. There is a break in continuity between octave and sestet, the *Petrarchan s.* differing in this respect from the *Miltonic s.*

in which the break is not always observed A third form is the *Shakespearian*, which consists of three quatrains, each with two independent rhymes, followed by a couplet also with independent rhymes

Spenserian stanza See STANZA

spirant A consonant that can be prolonged,
e g *f, th, v, l*

split infinitive See MOOD (infinitive)

spondee In Classical verse, a metrical foot consisting of two long syllables, e g *oat-cake, amen* In English, a foot of two stressed syllables, employed only in direct imitations of Classical measures See HEXAMETER

sprung rhythm A phrase invented by Gerard Manley Hopkins to describe "the rhythm of common speech and of written prose, when rhythm is perceived in them" He defined it as being "measured by feet of from one to four syllables, regularly, and for particular effects any number of weak or slack syllables may be used. It has one stress, which falls on the only syllable, if there is only one, or if there are more, on the first Any two stresses may either follow one another running or be divided by one, two or three slack syllables The feet are assumed to be equally long or strong, and their seeming inequality is made up by pause or stressing"

stanza. Group of four or more rhymed verse-

lines serving as a pattern for a longer poem
 The *Spenserian st* (used in the *Faerie Queene*)
 consists of nine lines, the first eight of ten syllables
 and the last of twelve, rhyming *ababbcbcc*

stem That part of a word to which inflections
 are added See INFLECTION

-stich A suffix from the Greek meaning *row*,
line, or *verse*, used in the names of verse groups
 (as is *distich*) Pron -stik

stichomythia Conversation in a verse-play in
 which the characters speak the lines alternately,
 as in Shakespeare's *King John*, III, 1, 320 and foll
 strong verb See VERB

strophe Strictly, part of a Greek ode sung
 while the chorus moved to one side of the scene,
 to be followed by a metrically similar chant (anti-
 strophe) as it returned Loosely applied to any
 stanza (q v)

subject The word or words in a sentence
 representing the person or thing about which
 something is said, e g 'The car *broke the record*

subjunctive. See MOOD

subordinate. Said of a clause or sentence
 which is dependent on another in a complex
 sentence, and which is introduced by a subordi-
 nating conjunction See CONJUNCTION.

substantive Expressing existence. The verb
to be is known as the *s verb*, or *verb s* A *noun s*
 is the name of a person or specific object.

suffix An affix placed at the end of a word or stem to modify its meaning or make a derivative, e g *wonder-ful*

superlative See DEGREE

supine infinitive One that takes *to* (e g *to have*) as distinguished from one that does not (*have*)

surd An antiquated name for an explosive consonant that is pronounced without vibration of the vocal cords, as *p, k, t*

syllipsis A figure in which one word is used in two different senses at the same time, usually literally and figuratively, e g *He took his hat and his leave*

synaereses (pron *sy-nee-ri-sis*) Making two vowel sounds into one, as when *extraordinary* is pron *-trord*, the opposite of DIAERESIS (q v)

syncope. The shortening of a word by dropping a syllable in the middle, e g *idolatry* for *idololatry*

synecdoche (pron *sin-ek-do-ki*) Figure of speech in which a part is used to imply the whole (e g *hands* for workman, *keels* for ships) or the whole a part (e g *Yorkshire won the toss*, to imply a football or cricket team)

synesis (pron *sin-i-sis*) The name given to the common fault of departing from the rules of syntax owing to the attraction of an idea which is seeking expression, e g. *These sort of things* Here *these* is suggested by *things*, whereas *sort* demands *this*.

synonym. A word that has approximately the same sense and function as another word, e.g. *snake* and *serpent*, *maid* and *girl*, *craft* and *cunning*. But see SYNONYMS AND TWIN WORDS in Part I

syntax The rules governing the construction of sentences, as distinct from *accidence* (the rules governing the inflection of words) and the study of the origin of words

T

tautology The repetition (in ordinary usage, the unnecessary repetition) of words or ideas in one context, e.g. *The boy again broke another window to-day*

tense The form of the verb which tells us the time at which the action takes place and also how far the action is complete. The chief tenses in the English verb, with their names, are set out in the following table

	PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
SIMPLE	<i>I drank</i>	<i>I drink</i>	<i>I shall drink</i>
CONTINUOUS	<i>I was drink- ing</i>	<i>I am drink- ing</i>	<i>I shall be drinking</i>
PERFECT	<i>I had drunk</i>	<i>I have drunk</i>	<i>I shall have drunk</i>

In addition there are the so-called Future in the Past tense, *I should drink, be drinking, have drunk*, and the Emphatic Present and Past tense, *I do drink, I did drink*

When a past action is described, for the sake of vividness, as though it were happening in the present, we say the writer is using the *historic present*, e g

*But hark! the cry is Astur
And lo! the ranks divide
And the great Lord of Luna
Comes with his stately stride*

tercet See TRIPLET

tern See TRIPLET

terza rima (pron *tehrt-sa ree-ma*) Verse-form in which the rhymes are arranged *aba, bcb, cdc*, etc , and the lines are of five iambic feet with an extra syllable The last tercet has a fourth line to avoid the leaving of a line unrhymed Used by Dante in *The Divine Comedy* In English verse, the terza rima is written in lines of five iambic feet without an extra syllable, e g Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*

tetralogy (pron *tet-ral-o-je*) A series of four connected plays, operas or novels, e g Wagner's *Ring*.

tetrameter. (pron *tet-ram-i-ter*) A line or verse consisting of four measures, i e of four or eight feet See MEASURE

tetrastich See QUATRAIN

thesis See ARSIS

threnody (pron. *three-nod-i*) A funeral song or dirge.

tnesis The insertion of a third word between the parts of a compound word, e g *What things soever* for *whatsoever things*

transitive verb. See VERB

tribrach A foot of three short syllables, e g
What was he / doing, the / *great god* / *Pan*?

trilogy (pron *tril-o-jī*) A set of three connected novels, operas or plays

trimeter A line or verse consisting of three measures, i e of three or six feet See MEASURE.

triplet Three consecutive lines of verse, also called a *tristich*, *tercet*, or *tern*

triolet (pron *tree-o-let*) An eight-line poem rhyming *a b a a b a b*, in which the first line is repeated in lines 4 and 7 and the second line is repeated at the end

tristich (pron *tris-tik*) See TRIPLET

trochaic Said of verse consisting of trochees (q v) e g *Dew-drops / are the / gems of / morning*

trochee (pron *trōh-kī*) A metrical foot consisting of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed, e g *daughter, body*

U

ultima Last syllable of a word *Ultimate* is the adj

umlaut (pron *oom-lout*) A vowel-change in Germanic languages due to the influence of another vowel in the following syllable, e g German *Mann, Manner*, Eng *man, men*. Mark () to indicate such a change.

V

verb A part of speech which says that a person or thing *does, is, thinks* or *suffers* something, *auxiliary vv*, six in number (*be, have, do, shall, will, may*) are used to help*in expressing the moods and tenses of other verbs, e g *I shall go, He was running* A *copulative v* connects the subject with a predicate noun, adjective, or pronoun, e g *He is a cyclist, My brother is happy*. A *finite v*, one that can be used as a predicate (q v), so-called because it is limited to the same person and number as its subject The only parts of a verb which are not finite are the *infinitive*, the *participle* and the *gerund* (q v) An *incomplete v* requires some word not an object to complete its sense, e g *He became captain* A *reflexive v* expresses an action which comes back on the subject, e.g *He seated himself at the table*. A

strong v forms its past tense and past participle by changing the main vowel, e g *sing, sang, sung*
A transitive v is one which requires an object; e g *He shot the dog*, an *intransitive v*, one which makes sense without an object, e g *The girl wept*
A weak v is one which forms its past tense and past participle by adding *-d*, *-ed*, or *-t*, to the infinitive form, with or without other changes, e g *dream, dreamt, dreamed* *V substantive*, see SUBSTANTIVE

verbal noun See GERUND

verbiage A contemptuous name for prolixity, the use of too many words

verse Note that in prosody this means *one line* of poetry as well as a number of such lines
Heroic v, see HEROIC

vers libre (pron *vair-leebr*) Verse in which the ordinary rules of prosody are disregarded; often unrhymed

villanelle A poem usually of five tercets (sometimes more) and a quatrain (q v) There are only two rhymes, one in the middle lines of the tercets and the second line of the quatrain, and the other everywhere else The first line recurs at the end of the second and fourth tercets, the third line at the end of the third and fifth tercets, and the quatrain ends with the first and third lines Good examples of this, as of other

highly artificial verse-forms, are to be found in the work of Austin Dobson

vocative See CASE

voice. That form of a verb which shows whether the subject performs the action or suffers it, e g in the sentence *The man broke the window* we are told that the subject *performs* the action, and the verb *broke* is said to be in the *active v*. In the sentence *The window was broken by the man*, the subject (*window*) suffers the action, and *was broken* is said to be in the *passive v*. The *passive v* is formed by adding the past participle of a verb (see PARTICIPLE) to a part of the verb *to be*.

W

weak verb. See VERB

Z

zeugma A grammatical construction in which a verb or adjective is applied to two nouns when logically it is applicable only to one, e g *The room was empty, the lights out*. Here *was* (understood) fails to supply the need for *were* before *out*.

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